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Ladies in the Bath: Nude Portraiture in the French Renaissance

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INTRODUCTION

The artists of the School of Fontainebleau produced a striking group of paintings depicting nude and half-nude women bathing or at their toilette. What is most striking about these works is that their format and the little that is known about their circumstances of production suggest that they are portraits. Before the advent of this genre in the sixteenth century, nudity was reserved for mythological and allegorical subjects in French painting with few exceptions. Here, however, artists appear to depict "real" women in the nude.

The women depicted in these mysterious paintings have been a continual source of fascination for scholars, who have tended to concentrate on one or two paintings in an effort to uncover the specific identity of the woman depicted. When the paintings are approached in this way, the idealization of the woman becomes an obstacle to overcome. The scholarly challenge lies in unmasking the portrait to reveal the true woman represented and her identity becomes the key to unlocking the painting's meaning. Scholars have suggested a wide array of women as possible subjects, including the royal mistresses Diane de Poitiers, Marie Touchet, Catherine Henriette de Balzac d'Entrague, and Gabrielle d'Estrées as well as the queen Mary Stuart. Once the woman's identity is established, each detail of the painting can be interpreted as a product of her personal biography. Often, the result is a strained exercise in visual association in which one or two details stubbornly refuse to be incorporated into the presumed sitter's biography. In each case, too little visual or textual evidence exists to confidently identify the woman. [1]

[1] In the case of Clouet's *Lady in Her Bath*, for example, the lady is traditionally identified as Diane de Poitiers. The identification has its source in George Guiffrey's publication of 1866 and has since been supported by numerous scholars. However, it poses many problems. First, the painting is dated to 1571 on the basis of the woman's bathing cap, which costume historians have identified as a style of the 1570s, and on stylistic

Further, the desire to uncover or unmask manifests a limited understanding of identity and portraiture that the paintings themselves resist. Patricia Simons, Elizabeth Cropper, and Lorne Campbell have all written eloquently on the ambiguous idealization of Renaissance portraits of women.[2] Simons emphasizes the need to move away from understanding any Renaissance portrait as a transparent, empirically unproblematic representation of an individual, an understanding that plagues modern interpretations. In place of such an approach, she urges scholars to reinterpret portraits critically according to categories like class, gender, and age, an approach that will reveal the conventional, performative, and political aspects of the portrait.[3] Renaissance artists and theorists themselves demonstrate an understanding of the portrait as a

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similarities with Clouet's later works, especially his portrait of Elisabeth of Austria. It seems unlikely then that the painting would represent Diane, who died in 1566, and whose prestige and influence derived in large part from her relationship with Henri II, who died even earlier in 1559. Second, the painting does not match the distinctive aspects of Diane's physiognomy as revealed in portrait drawings at Chantilly, nor does it contain any of her traditional symbols, such as the crescent moon of the goddess Diana, or the colors black and white with which she is traditionally associated. Third, the presence of the children is inexplicable given that Diane de Poiters had only two daughters. The suggestion that Diane de Poitier represented herself in the nude with Henri II's children seems unlikely even given her famous involvement in the education and upbringing of the royal children. Louis Dimier and Irene Adler were the first to suggest an alternate identification of the woman as Marie Touchet, mistress of Charles IX, and were supported by many later scholars. Again, however, this identification is problematic. Marie Touchet did bear the king two children, but the first died in infancy and the second was not born until after François Clouet's death. Roger Trinquet´s identification of the woman as Queen Mary Stuart rests on the questionable idea that the painting is satirical and is further undermined by his tenuous reading of the details in the painting. In Trinquet's reading, the child is Mary and Darnley's son, the future James I of England. Clouet represents him twice, once in the background as an infant with his mother disguised as a peasant and a second time in the foreground again with his mother now at the age when the work was painted. The black bands around the infant in swaddling cloth reference the cross of Saint Andrew and hence, Scotland, and the unicorn in the background is a multiple allusion to Mary Stuart and Darnley. As I hope this example demonstrates, attempts to explain the painting purely though biography are often strained. For a complete history of the conflicting identifications, see Plogsterth's entry on the painting in Ann Plogsterth, "The Institution of the Royal Mistress and the Iconography of Nude Portraiture in Sixteenth-Century France" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1991), 263-7.

[2] See Patricia Simons, "Portraiture, Portrayal, and Idealization: Ambiguous Individualism in Representations of Renaissance Women," in *Language and Images of Renaissance Italy*, ed. Alison Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995): 263-311; Elizabeth Cropper, "The Beauty of Woman: Problems in the Rhetoric of Renaissance Portraiture," in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Margaret W. Ferguson et al (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986): 175-90; and Lorne Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits: European Portrait-Painting in the 14th, 15th, and 16th Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

[3] Simons, "Portraiture, Portrayal, and Idealization," 264-6.

highly mediated form and do not see the individual and the ideal as necessarily being in conflict.[4] Many paintings from the Renaissance resist the strict category of portrait or ideal. This is particularly true of portraits of women whose identities are often closely tied to cultural poetics and social conventions. This group of portraits, which combines a traditional portrait format with idealized nude forms, demonstrates precisely such resistance to easy categorization. Current scholarship, in its focus on unmasking the specific identity of the women represented, operates on a particularized notion of identity that sees the individual and ideal as necessarily in conflict. Even more recent feminist scholarship, like Ann Plogsterth's study of the paintings, regards the idealization of women in Renaissance art in general, and in these paintings in particular, as masking "the real Renaissance women, who remain invisible behind their fantasy image constructed by male society. This is especially true of the nude ladies depicted by the School of Fontainebleau, all artifice and illusion in their fanciful undress and mannered posing."[5] The paintings themselves, however, offer a more complicated picture of identity in which the individual and ideal are intimately connected, even mutually constitutive. Further, the conscious artificiality of the paintings, "the artifice . . . illusion . . . and mannered posing," which Plogsterth alludes to, suggests that the women are not subject to but participants in their construction as ideals.

This thesis explores how the women in these portraits are represented as active contributors to their own image-making. Harry Berger's *Fictions of the Pose* provides a model

[4] Ibid., 268.
[5] Plogsterth, "The Institution of the Royal Mistress," 21.

for this approach.[6] Berger considers portraits as imitations or likenesses not only of individuals but also of their acts of posing. The primary object that the portrait imitates is not the likeness of a person but of an act, the act of sitting for one's portrait. This approach shifts the attention from the painter to also consider the sitter's part in the image-making, recognizing the act of posing as an act of self-portrayal. I believe this model to be particularly suited to studying this group of portraits from Fontainebleau, which consciously emphasize the role of their sitters in constructing and performing their identities.

Indeed, the paintings reflect the creative and performative nature of women's identity and sexuality at the French Renaissance court. The court was newly established in the sixteenth century, having its root in the reign of François I.[7] In the 1520s, François I built the Château de Fontainebleau as his primary residence, and therefore, the seat of the monarchy and the home of the court. He modeled his court after the cultural sophistication of the Italian Renaissance court where polished manners, literature, music, and visual arts were carefully cultivated. Fontainebleau would produce two influential artistic schools and the visual arts played an especially important role in fashioning the nascent court's communal identity as well as the individual identity of it members.[8] The notion of identity as a manipulable, artful process

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[6] Harry Berger, Jr., *Fictions of the Pose: Rembrandt against the Italian Renaissance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

[7] For more on the political, cultural, intellectual, and social history of the early French court, see R. J. Knecht, The French Renaissance Court, 1483-1589 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

[8] The use of the term School of Fontainebleau has a complicated history. In its strictest sense, it refers only to the artists who worked at the château, namely the Italian artists, Rosso Fiorentino and Francesco Primaticcio, and their French assistants. It is also used more broadly to refer to the style that developed at the château but spread throughout France and the rest of Europe. This thesis will employ the broader definition of the term. Art historical scholarship on the school began with the 1904 exhibition of French Primitives in Paris and Henri Bouchot's catalogue, Henri Bouchot, *Exposition des Primitifs Français au Palais du Louvre* (Paris: Libraire de l'Art, 1892). This inspired the efforts of other scholars and the definitive catalogue for the school came in 1960

appeared in literature around this time, notably in Baldassare Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* (1528), translated into French in 1537.[9] Increasingly throughout the sixteenth century, court etiquette and ritual turned life at court into an elaborate mythology. Every aspect of life became stylized and ritualized, became art. Henri Zerner has argued that the Fontainebleau style with its "intentionally artificial character" offered a visual analogue to the stylized comportment of its inhabitants.[10] At Fontainebleau, it was the visual, plastic, and spatial arts even more than literature that helped shape this courtly sense of self. This group of portraits reflects the sense of self as fashionable and presents identity as constructed and performed.

While the portraits' patronage remains unknown, the model of contemporary women patrons who used art to actively fashion their identities offer a lens through which to understand these portraits. The most famous example is Diane de Poitiers, royal mistress to Henri II and a great patron of the arts, who frequently adopted the iconography of the goddess Diana as a means of shaping her identity in art and literature. She richly decorated her châteaux of Anet and Chenonceau with the Diana motif, had her praises sung by poets like Du Bellay, Ronsard, and de Magny, and commissioned tapestries and paintings which portrayed her under various guises of the goddess. [11] One particularly relevant painting in which scholars believe Diane to be

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with Sylvie Béguin, *L'Ecole de Fontainebleau* (Paris: Editions d'Art Gonthier-Seghers, 1960). For the best surveys in more recent scholarship see, Henri Zerner, *Renaissance Art in France: The Invention of Classicism* (Paris: Flammarion, 2003); and Rebecca Zorach, *Blood, Milk, Ink, Gold: Abundance and Excess in the French Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[9] Baldassarre Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (Aldine Press, 1528).

[10] Zerner, *Renaissance Art in France*, 120-1.

[11] For biography on Diane de Poitiers, see Philippe Erlanger, *Diane de Poitiers* (Paris: Gallimard, 1955) and Ivan Cloulas, *Diane de Poitiers* (Paris: Fayard, 1997). For her patronage of the arts and fashioning of her identity through the goddess Diana, see Françoise Bardon, *Diane de Poitiers et le Mythe de Diane* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963); André Chastel, "Diane de Poitiers: 'L'Eros de la Beauté Froide," in *Fables, Formes, Figures*, vol. I (Paris: Flammarion, 1978): 163–72; Plogsterth, "The Institution of the Royal

represented in the nude will be discussed in greater detail in the first chapter (Figure 7). It is not possible to securely identify the women in this group of portraits or to determine whether they played a hand in directly commissioning them. I believe it is, however, in keeping with the period and known models of women patronage, to argue that the women informed their portraits, at the very least through the identities they cultivated and performed at court. Indeed, the performance of identity at court through its various rituals was intimately linked to art. Castiglione tellingly described his book on the ideal courtier as "a portrait of the Court of Urbino," grounding his treatment of courtly artifice and body management in the standards of portraiture. The portrait offered women another opportunity to perform their identities in art. The paintings highlight the active role that the ladies take in transforming themselves into ideals in partnership with the artist, ideals of beauty and eroticism as well as fertility and maternity.

In my first chapter, I analyze François Clouet's *Lady in Her Bath*, generally believed to be the first painting of the group, and therefore, progenitor of the genre (Figure 1). Based on conceptions of bathing revealed by contemporary visual and textual sources, I argue that

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Mistress, " 111-8; Patricia Zalamea, "Subject to Diana: Picturing Desire in French Renaissance Courtly Aesthetics" (PhD diss., Rutgers University, 2007); Sigrid Ruby, "Diane de Poitiers: Veuve et Favorite," in *Patronnes et Mécènes En France à La Renaissance*, ed. Kathleen Wilson-Chevalier and Eugénie Pascal (Saint-Étienne: Publications de L'Université de Saint-Étienne, 2007): 381–99; and the chapter "Versions of Diana: Gender and Renaissance Mythography" in Juliana Schiesari, *Beasts and Beauties Animals, Gender and Domestication in the Italian Renaissance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010): 92-125. Diane de Poitier's self-fashioning inspired later royal mistresses, including Gabrielle d'Estrées, the mistress of Henri IV who will be important to this study. For her biography and patronage of the arts, see M. Capefigue, *Gabrielle d'Estrées et La Politique de Henri IV* (Paris: Amyot, 1859); Adrien Desclozeaux, *Gabrielle d'Estrées, Marquise de Monceaux, Duchesse de Beaufort* (Paris: H. Champion, 1889); Philippe Erlanger, *Gabrielle d'Estrées: Femme Fatale* (Paris: J. Dullis, 1975) and Inès Murat, *Gabrielle d'Estrees* (Paris: Fayard, 1992). Finally for the role of powerful women at court, especially in the arts, see, Kathleen Anne Wellman, *Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); Christiane Gil, *Les Femmes de François Ier* (Paris: Pygmalion, 2005); Yassana Croizat-Glazer, "Fashioning Femininity: Beauty, Royalty and the Rhetoric of Gender at Fontainebleau (1528--1547)" (PhD diss., New York University, 2008); and Kathleen Wilson-Chevalier and Eugénie Pascal, eds., *Patronnes et Mécènes En France à La Renaissance* (Saint-Ètienne: Publications de L'Universitè de Saint-Ètienne, 2007).

Clouet's decision to represent the lady in the bath emphasizes her role in fashioning herself into an ideal at once erotic and maternal. The connection between art and bathing appears throughout the period, especially in the Appartements des Bains at the Château de Fontainebleau. This connection underscores the equation of the artifice of bathing and painting in Clouet's portrait, and therefore, the shared enterprise of lady and artist.

In my second chapter, I analyze the enigmatic portrait presumed to depict Gabrielle d'Estrées and her sister in the bath (Figure 35). I question the traditional scholarly interpretation that understands the painting, especially its famous nipple-pinch, as solely an allusion to Gabrielle's pregnancy, denying the potentially erotic, even homoerotic effect of the painting as in conflict with such a reading. I demonstrate that the homoerotic effect of the painting actually enhances the image of Gabrielle as an ideal of beauty and eroticism as well as fertility and maternity and again shows Gabrielle to be an active participant in the construction of that ideal, through the powerful affect she has on the viewer.

In my third chapter, I address the many copies and variants of these two paintings, which other scholars have neglected and which significantly alter our understanding of the works. I argue that the lady in the bath theme actually constituted a formula that operates similarly to the more standard court portrait formula established by Clouet. I argue that the act of copying was itself performative, comparing it to other rituals of the court. I use the model of prints to explore the manner in which the paintings are reproduced and specifically the way in which various elements are reworked and recombined. I argue that the way in which these motifs freely

circulate is the ultimate demonstration of the fusion of the erotic and maternal ideals that these paintings represent.

By examining the paintings as a group, rather than individually, I hope to answer larger questions about the paintings' meaning, function, and what they reveal to us about women of the period. At the end of his examination of François Clouet's *Lady in Her Bath,* Zerner explicitly writes, "This long gloss does not by any means exhaust all there is to say about this strange painting. I have not even raised the question that feminist studies oblige us to pose today, that of the role of women in society. The implications of our painting are obviously great from this point of view, but they are, to my mind, far from being simple or obvious."[12] This thesis attempts to investigate those far from simple implications, exploring the unusual group of portraits as a reflection of the creative and performative nature of women's identity and sexuality in the period.

[12] Zerner, *Renaissance Art in France*, 225.

CHAPTER ONE

Lady in the Bath: The Living Mythology of the Bath

A pair of sumptuous red curtains part to reveal a lady seated in the bath (Figure 1).[13] The lady is entirely nude apart from her gold jewelry and velvet bathing cap, adornments that only serve to highlight her otherwise bare flesh. She is the picture of feminine beauty; her ivory skin glows softly and her perfectly idealized features seductively turn in the direction of the viewer. Her right arm extends to rest on a board covered with the white cloth that surrounds the bath. The board supports a gold-rimmed bowl full of delectable fruits, apples, pears, cherries, and grapes among them. Around the foot of the bowl, herbs, fruits, and flowers are scattered. From this assembly, the lady has picked up a dianthus, or pink, which she toys in her hand.

The back left curtain of the tub has been pulled back to reveal a crowded domestic scene. In the shallow middle ground, a small boy with curly hair and rosy, cherubic cheeks and dressed in luxuriant green velvet eyes the fruit in the bowl longingly and reaches for it. His hand hovers just above the grapes and cherries. Behind him, an older woman looks on while nursing an infant in swaddling clothes. Her rough costume and white head covering identify her as a wet nurse.

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[13] François Clouet, *Lady in Her Bath*, 1571. Oil on panel, 36 5/16 x 31 15/16 in. (92.3 x 81.2 cm.). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. The scene is painted on an oak panel composed of six joined boards. The support was prepared with a chalk ground applied in numerous thin layers. Over the chalk ground, the artist applied two priming layers of gray paint. Examination with infrared reflectography revealed ruled lines around the edges of the support, with small tick marks placed equidistantly along them, suggesting the artist used a squaring method to transfer the pictorial composition to the prepared panel. The artist then applied the paint in multiple thin layers with a great range of surface textures, glazes, and impasto. He used a layer of underpainting for the flesh tones and then modeled these areas further, using thin scumbles in the highlights and glazes in the shadows. He added some azurite particles to the bather's body to enhance the brilliance of her pearly white skin. The smoothly modeled and enamel-like areas of flesh contrast with the curtains, which observation reveals have been blotted with a finger or piece of fabric. The painting is in good condition so this intricate brushwork is largely preserved. For further technical details, see John Oliver Hand, "François Clouet's A Lady in Her Bath," in *French Paintings of the Fifteenth through the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Philip Conisbee (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2009).

Her ruddy complexion and coarse, animated face stand in vivid contrast to the ivory skin and cool, idealized beauty of the lady in the bath. Further back still into the sumptuous interior, a young maid leans forward to collect a golden pitcher from the fire, likely carrying hot water to refresh the bath of her beautiful mistress.

The lady's right hand draws back the white cloth that lines the tub to uncover a carved inscription, "FR. JANETII OPUS," the signature of the artist François Clouet (Figure 1b). François Clouet was court painter to a succession of French kings. Along with his father, Jean Clouet, François brought about the establishment and standardization of French portraiture in the sixteenth century.[14] Jean Clouet, a Netherlandish artist of obscure origins, appears in the royal accounts as the first artist devoted solely to portraiture under François I.[15] His son succeeded him in this position and continued the tradition under the reigns of kings François I, Henri II, François II, and Charles IX. Hundreds of paintings and thousands of drawings attest to the passion for portraiture at the French court during this period. Both paintings and drawings present their subjects without affectation, following a monotonous rule of format and pose, as demonstrated by the comparable paintings of Claude de Beaune de Semblancay, Madeleine le Clerc du Tremblay, and Elisabeth of Austria produced by Clouet and his workshop (Figures 2-4). All three women are represented half-length and in three-quarter view against a plain

[14] For the primary scholarship on the artist, see Henri Bouchot, *Les Clouet et Corneille de Lyon* (Paris: Libraire de l'Art, 1892); Louis Dimier, *Le Portrait Du XVIe Siècle Aux Primitifs Français* (Paris: Libraire de la Société de L'Histoire de L'Art Français, 1904); and Etienne Moreau-Nélaton, *Les Clouet et leurs Émules* (Paris: Laurens, 1924); and more recently, Etienne Jollet and Isabelle d'Hauteville, *Jean & François Clouet* (Paris: Lagune, 1997); Alexandra Zvereva, *Portraits Dessinés de La Cour Des Valois: Les Clouet de Catherine de Médicis* (Paris: Arthena Editions, 2011); and Alexandra Zvereva and Nicole Garnier-Pelle, *Le Cabinet Des Clouet Au Château de Chantilly: Renaissance et Portrait de Cour En France* (Paris: Editions Nicolais Chaudun, 2011). Also see the chapter, "The Clouets," in Zerner, *Renaissance Art in France*: 194-225.
[15] Anthony Blunt, *Art and Architecture in France, 1500 to 1700* (London: Penguin Books, 1953), 34.

background. Despite differences in face and dress, the standard format and pose creates a strong sense of commonality between the ladies.

This standard formula has led Henri Zerner to bestow on father and son the title of "the inventors of banality."[16] The seeming banality of these images played an important role in establishing a common identity for the court, newly constituted under François I. Within the extremely narrow limits of this conventional formula, each inflection of the face, each nuance of expression became important. The reading of these portraits became a society game. Members of the court copied, exchanged, and collected the drawings in albums. They wrote names and verses under the portraits, which when covered by removable cards, allowed the courtiers to playfully test their knowledge. For all but the best-trained courtier, however, the most marked characteristic of this production is its monotony. The homogeneity of this group of portraits is so remarkable, in fact, that it led scholars to initially attribute to Jean Clouet nearly all of the portraits produced in France from François I to Henri III, an impossibly large output over an impossibly long length of time.[17] It is against this background of uniformity that the curiosity and inventiveness of *Lady in Her Bath* emerges. Clouet's representation of the lady, and particularly his choice to represent her in the bath, reveals something of the creative and performative nature of women's identity and sexuality at the French court. In the act of bathing, the lady participates in her construction as an ideal image of beauty and eroticism as well as fertility and maternity.

A Formula for Combining the Portrait and the Ideal Nude

[16] Zerner, *Renaissance Art in France*, 193-204.
[17] The scholars, Henri Bouchot, Louis Dimier, and Etienne Moreau-Nelaton are largely responsible for differentiating the work of Jean and François Clouet and bringing its individual character to light.

The originality of the work lies partly in its combination of the portrait and the ideal nude. The ideal or heroic nude, appearing frequently in the art of Fontainebleau, had been primarily reserved for mythological or allegorical contexts. Very few French precedents exist for this combination. There are a few exceptions; the nursing Virgin of Fouquet's *Melun Diptych* is thought to be a portrait of Agnès Sorel, "Dame de Beauté" and the mistress of Charles VII (Figure 5). Agnès, the first officially recognized royal mistress, was renowned for both her beauty and her power and influence. She is credited with starting a court fashion for deep, square décolleté gowns with fully bared breasts.[18] In Fouquet's painting, this fashion is transposed onto the bare-breasted virgin. The idea that Fouquet represented Agnès in the guise of his nursing Virgin appears as early as the sixteenth century. In the Comte de Bussy-Rabutin's "Galerie delle Belle," a collection of portraits of women renowned for their beauty that decorated and drew visitors to his château, the fair Agnès was represented by a sixteenth-century portrait indirectly derived from the Virgin of Melun (Figure 6).[19] Seventeenth century commentators confirmed this identification; in 1661, Denis Godefroy wrote, "Some people would say that his [Fouquet's] image was painted after the figure of Agnès Sorel, *amie* of Charles VII."[20]

A century later, Diane de Poitiers, the beautiful mistress of Henri II, whose power and influence aligned her closely with her predecessor Agnès, is also said to have been represented in the nude. The Louvre's anonymous painting of *Diana the Huntress* is commonly believed to

[18] Pierre Champion, *La Dame de Beauté, Agnès Sorel* (Paris: H. Champion, 1931), 144.
[19] Zerner, *Renaissance Art in France*, 209.
[20] Ibid., 209.

represent the royal mistress (Figure 7).[21] Diane de Poitiers, a great patron of the arts, frequently adopted the iconography of the goddess Diana in representing herself; she richly decorated her châteaux of Anet and Chenonceau with the Diana motif, had her praises sung by poets like Du Bellay, Ronsard, and de Magny, and commissioned tapestries and paintings which portrayed her under various guises of the goddess.[22] Diane's artistic self-fashioning provided a model for later women; for example, Gabrielle d'Estrées, the mistress to Henri IV, represents herself in a similar guise as in Ambroise Dubois' painting (Figure 8). In these representations of Agnès and Diane, however, which can properly be classified as "portrait mythologique," the religious or mythological aspect is more pronounced and provides a more ready pretext for nudity than Clouet's *Lady in Her Bath*.[23] The mythological or allegorical veil has been lifted to reveal the lady. The pose and presentation of the model are consistent with the standards of portraiture; she is represented in a static pose, half-length in three-quarter view, gazing outward toward the viewer. These features suggest the representation of an individual.

Although few French precedents exist for combining the ideal nude and the portrait, Clouet may have found his formula in the work of an Italian artist. David Alan Brown and Konrad Oberhuber argue that Leonardo developed a new genre of erotic portraiture during the

[21] In the catalog of paintings included in her dissertation, Ann Plogsterth provides a history of the painting's attribution and identification. The earliest identification of the nude lady as Diane de Poitiers that Plogsterth locates is in the Le Breton collection sales catalog from 1840 in which the painting appears. Nearly all scholars who have since written about the painting agree with this identification. See Plogsterth, "The Institution of the Royal Mistress," 296-8.

[22] For more information on Diane de Poitiers and her artistic self-fashioning, see footnote 11 in the introduction.

[23] For more information on the genre of the "portrait mythologique," especially during the sixteenth century, see Françoise Bardon, *Le Portrait Mythologique à la Cour de France sous Henri IV et Louis XIII: Mythologie et Politique* (Paris: A. et J. Picard, 1974).

latter years of his career.[24] Though the original painting that initiated this genre does not survive, evidence for it can be found in numerous copies and variants by Leonardo's followers. Named the *Mona Vanna*, the painting is believed by Brown and Oberhuber to have been a portrait of the mistress of Giuliano de' Medici depicted in the nude. The surviving works closest in character to the original are the cartoon by follower Andrea Salaì or Francesco Melzi at Chantilly and Salaì's related painting at the Louvre (Figures 9 and 10). The differences amongst surviving copies suggest that Leonardo never completed his work but rather was likely engaged in preparing a full-scale cartoon, when at the time of Giuliano's death in 1516, the project was abandoned. When invited by François I to France to serve under his royal patronage, Leonardo brought the cartoon with him, where it was remarked upon in his studio by Cardinal Louis of Aragon and his secretary.[25] Though incomplete, the cartoon inspired Leonardo's fellow artists in Rome, as exemplified by Raphael's *La Fornarina*, and continued to inspire artists north of the Alps (Figure 11).

The nude portrait allowed Leonardo to combine the specific identity of the woman he represented with the ideals of beauty and femininity ascribed to mythological or ideal nudes. Clouet was clearly influenced by Leonardo's work or one of its copies in *Lady in Her Bath*, with which it shares its frank nudity, idealized body, and pose.[26] The lady is similarly represented

[24] David Alan Brown and Konrad Oberhuber, "Monna Vanna and Fornarina: Leonardo and Raphael in Rome," in *Essays Presented to Myron P. Gilmore*, ed. Sergio Bertelli and Gloria Ramakus, vol. 2 (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1978), 26.
[25] Ibid., 27. For more information on the painting's history in France, see Laure Fagnart, *Léonard de Vinci en France: Collections et Collectionneurs (XVème –XVIIème Siècles)* (Rome: Bretschneider, 2009), 71-3.
[26] Brown and a host of other scholars argue for the influence of the *Mona Vanna* on *Lady in Her Bath*, including Blunt, *Art and Architecture in France*, 63-4; Béguin, *L'Ecole de Fontainebleau*, 102; James Snyder, *Northern Renaissance Art: Painting, Sculpture, the Graphic Arts from 1350 to 1575* (New York: Abrams, 1985), 518; Plogsterth, "The Institution of the Royal Mistress," 104-8; Albert Châtelet and Jacques Thuillier,

half-length in three-quarter view with her arm resting on a ledge that crosses the picture plane. Thus, Clouet likely found either in Leonardo's *Mona Vanna* or one of its variants the idea for a nude portrait that would combine the individual identity of a woman with the ideal.

The Maternal and the Erotic in the Bath

While the pose and presentation of Clouet's lady closely echo Leonardo's *Mona Vanna*, the setting differs starkly. Indeed, scholars have often noted the competing halves of Clouet's painting.[27] In fact, when divided vertically where the bath's curtains break, the painting appears almost as two separate works (Figure 1a). The right side, filled almost entirely with the protagonist isolated and turning toward the viewer, corresponds closely with portrait types and Leonardo's *Mona Vanna* in particular. The left side, however, represents a bustling domestic scene occupied by the lady's servants and children, and corresponds more closely to genre painting.

I argue that it is the bath that functions narratively and visually to connect the two halves of the painting. Contemporary conceptions of bathing and its function can aid us in understanding the seemingly disparate halves. Beginning in the sixteenth century, the health benefits of bathing were regarded circumspectly. The spread of the plague coupled with a new understanding of disease and the process of contagion cast the act of bathing in a dangerous light

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French Painting: From Fouquet to Poussin (Geneva: Skira, 1963), 111; Jollet and Hauteville, *Jean & François Clou*et, 272; Zerner, *Renaissance Art in France,* 212-3; Fagnart, *Léonard de Vinci en France*, 71-3; and Hand, "François Clouet's A Lady in Her Bath," 118.

[27] Zerner writes, for example, "In the Renaissance tradition, half of a painting, like half of a musical phrase, allows one roughly to anticipate the other. But in *Lady in Her Bath,* there is nothing of the sort." One half corresponds to "portraiture" and the other half to a "genre scene." Zerner, *Renaissance Art in France,* 205.

and both public and private bathing diminished.[28] Immersing oneself in water or steam was believed to open the pores, making oneself vulnerable to infection and also upsetting the bodily humors. In 1585, for example, the French barber surgeon Ambroise Paré writes, "Steam-baths and bath-houses should be forbidden, because when one emerges, the flesh and the whole disposition of the body are softened and the pores open, and as a result, pestiferous vapour can rapidly enter the body and cause sudden death, as has frequently been observed."[29] This sentiment applied most strongly to public or communal bathing, especially amongst the lower classes, and led to the closure of nearly all public bathhouses. Of the four steam baths in Dijon, the last was destroyed by mid-century. Those in Beauvais, Angers, and Sens were gone by the end of the century. Only a small number survived in Paris and most were medicinal in purpose.[30] The baths at Fontainebleau form a rare exception and indicate that the tradition of pleasure associated with bathing was continued for only an elite few. The vast majority of texts, however, advised against bathing whether in public or private. Montaigne observed the custom "lost, which was widely observed in times past by almost all nations."[31]

Bathing was encouraged on rare occasions and only with a prescribed purpose. For women, one such occasion was immediately following birth. Post-parturition bathing was regarded as essential to restoring women's fertility and sexual availability in early modern

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[28] For a useful overview of contemporary conceptions on bathing, see Georges Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness: Changing Attitudes in France since the Middle Ages*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1988),1-89.
[29] Ambroise Paré, *Les Oeuvres d'Ambroise Paré* (Paris: Chez Gabriel Buon, 1585), 56, quoted in Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness*, 9.
[30] Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness,* 22.
[31] Michel de Montaigne, *Les Essais* (Paris: Chez Abel L'Angelier, 1595), 810, quoted in Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness,* 26.

theories of maternal care.[32] The general strictures on bathing and the specific prescriptions governing its use in the period allow us to locate the precise time of the woman's life depicted in Clouet's *Lady in Her Bath* as a moment shortly after childbirth. This explains the presence of children and particularly of the wet nurse, which scholars have had difficulty accounting for in the past. Indeed, the distinctive swaddling cloth that the infant is wrapped in is of the type worn immediately after birth.[33] Another example of this swaddling cloth can be seen in George de la Tour's *Newborn Child* (Figure 12).

The post-parturition bath represented a liminal time in the woman's life. In *Lady in Her Bath*, Clouet emphasizes this liminality by the liminal space that the lady occupies in the painting. She hovers between her maternal and erotic roles, between the bustling domestic scene on the left occupied by the figure of the wet nurse and her children and the private scene on the right where she offers herself as a desirable object to the viewer. The bath signifies her recent childbirth and therefore, her newly established maternity; it also suggests, however, her sexual availability, miraculously restored through the same bath's healing power. The young boy seems to engage with both the maternal and erotic aspects. A product of the lady's maternity, he nonetheless reaches longingly for the bowl of fruits set before her, grasping especially at the cherries, which symbolize her sexuality. The bath serves to bridge the two halves of the painting and to transform the lady into a simultaneously maternal and erotic ideal.

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[32] Hélène Cazes, "Baths, Scrubs, and Cuddles: How to Bathe Young Infants According to Simon De Vallambert (1564)," in *The Nature and Function of Water, Baths, Bathing, and Hygiene from Antiquity through the Renaissance*, ed. Cynthia Kosso and Anne Scott (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 167. Scholars Pierre Bertrand and Ann Plogsterth have also linked Clouet's *Lady in Her Bath* to the moment of birth, see Pierre Bertrand, "Le Portrait de Gabrielle D'Estrées au Musée Condé de Chantilly ou la Gloire de la Maternité," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 135 (1993): 73–82; Plogsterth, "The Institution of the Royal Mistress," 5.

[33] Simon de Vallambert, *Cinq Livres de La Manière de Nourrir et Gouverner Les Enfants Dès Leur Naissance* (Poitiers: Marneszaet Bouchetz Frères, 1565), 46, quoted in Cazes, "Baths, Scrubs, and Cuddles," 167.

Performative Identity: Deconstructing the Ideal

Clouet's choice to represent the lady in the bath also emphasizes the way in which she participates in the construction of herself as such an ideal. A comparison to Leonardo's *Mona Vanna* is again useful. Leonardo's ideal beauty is set in an idyllic landscape. Mary Garrard has written on the manner in which Leonardo's paintings elaborate an analogy between women and nature.[34] In the *Mona Lisa*, for example, Garrard points to a system of similes connecting figure and landscape, of visual echoes between curved arcs and undulating folds, and to a unity between them expressed through diffuse lighting and consistent sfumato (Figure 13). The woman is coextensive with the geologic activity that surrounds her; the flowing movements and dynamic processes visible in the landscape correspond to the cascading, rippling patterns of the lady's clothing and hair. Thus, Leonardo associates the powerful female image with the highly developed, extraordinary landscape, as if to assert the unity between the woman's body and the regenerative processes of the natural world. This association is even stronger in the *Mona Vanna*, in which there is little clothing to obstruct the unity of the woman's form and the landscape. Thus, in his portraits and especially in his nude portrait, Leonardo naturalizes the ideal of beauty and fertility that he represents.

In Clouet's portrait, the lady has been brought inside. If a metaphor exists between the lady's beauty and nature, it is the domesticated, cut, trimmed, and carefully arranged beauty of the still life set before her or the carefully framed nature of the far window echoed by a nearby painting. Indeed rather than representing the lady's beauty as natural and unadorned, the

[34] Mary D. Garrard, "Leonardo Da Vinci: Female Portraits, Female Nature," in *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*, ed. Norma Broude and Garrard (New York: IconEditions, 1992): 60–85.

painting catalogues the many factors that contribute to it. The lady's delicate adornments, her headdress and golden jewelry, enhance her beauty. Less obvious factors include her servants, the young maid who retrieves a pitcher of water to replenish her lady's bath and more prominently the wet nurse. The wet nurse's ruddy complexion and coarse, animated face provides a foil for the ivory skin and cool, idealized beauty of the lady. In particular, their breasts, the nurse's globular breasts used to nurse the child, which allow the mistress to maintain her youthful, delicately shaped breasts, form a vivid contrast. During the Renaissance, it was common for elite women to entrust their babies to wet nurses in order to maintain the ideal of a youthful bosom.[35]

Finally, represented in the act of bathing, the lady herself actively contributes to her image. As noted, the post-parturition bath played an important role in restoring women's status as sexually available and desirable. Contemporary texts offer various ways in which the medicinal and cosmetic powers of the bath, in the case of post-parturition and more generally, could be enhanced. In the foreground of Clouet's *Lady in Her Bath*, spread on a shelf across the bath, lies an array of fruits, herbs, and flowers. Around the bowl of artfully arranged fruit lie a variety of herbs and flowers scattered in a rather unnatural manner as if to ensure that each herb and flower's individual character is visible. Scholars Elise Goodman-Soellner, Lilian Branshaw, and Dorothy Jones have understood these fruits and flowers to function as Petrarchan metaphors

[35] During the Renaissance, the use of wet nurses was a matter of debate. A body of literature arose claiming that it was a mother's duty to breastfeed and that the use of a wet nurse was a risky substitute for the biological mother. For example, Ambroise Paré encouraged women to breastfeed not only for the sake of the health of the child but also for the pleasure it afforded both mother and child. Nonetheless, most upper-class women engaged wet nurses at least partly to satisfy contemporary ideals of beauty, see Marilyn Yalom, *A History of the Breast* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 68-71.

for the lady's beauty.[36] While the fruits and flowers might serve as general symbols for beauty and fertility, I believe they have real and not merely symbolic value as potential additives for the bath. The manner in which Clouet has painted them, individually, sharply outlined, and with almost scientific accuracy, calls to mind the appearance of the herbs and flowers that fill the pages of Renaissance books of secrets and related beauty manuals and herbal and medicinal guides and that writers recommended adding to the bath for their various health or cosmetic benefits.[37] A comparison of Clouet's carefully painted herbs and flowers with the illustrations of Leonhart Fuchs' *De Historia* or Rembert Dodoens' *Florum et Coronarium odoratarumque nonnullarum herbarum historia* highlights their similarity to botanical illustrations (Figure 1c and Figures 14-15).[38] Their stark appearance against the white tablecloth recalls the illustration's appearance against the white page. The hue of the tub's water, which appears to have deliberate coloration, might already suggest the presence of these herbal and floral additives (Figure 1d). Holding a dianthus flower, the lady draws attention to and participates in the secret bathing and cosmetic practices that transform her into an ideal.

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[36] Elise Goodman Soellner, "Poetic Interpretations of the 'Lady at Her Toilette' Theme in Sixteenth-Century Painting," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 14, no. 14 (1983): 426–42; and Lilian Branshaw and Dorothy M. Jones, "Luxury, Love, and Charity: Four Paintings from the School of Fontainebleau," *Australian Journal of Art* 3 (1978): 39–58. See also Leonard Forster, *The Icy Fire: Five Studies in European Petrarchism* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), ix.

[37] For more information on Renaissance "books of secrets," see Jo Wheeler, *Renaissance Secrets, Recipes & Formulas* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2009); Rudolph M. Bell, *How to Do It: Guides to Good Living for Renaissance Italians* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Sandra Cavallo and Tessa Storey, *Healthy Living in Late Renaissance Italy* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013); and Michèle Bimbener-Privat, "La Littérature Cosmétologique: Traités et Secrets de Beauté," in *Le Bain et Le Miroir: Soins Du Corps et Cosmétiques De L'antiquité à La Renaissance*, ed. Isabelle Bardiès-Fronty, Bimbener-Privat, and Philippe Walter (Paris: Gallimard, 2009), 280–81.

[38] Leonhart Fuchs, *De Historia Stirpium Commentarii Insignes* (Basel: Isingrin, 1542); Rembert Dodoens, *Florum et Coronarium Odoratarumque Nonnullarum Herbarum Historia* (Antwerp: Plantin, 1568).

Clouet's entire composition forms a visual analogue with these books of secrets, unusually crowded and overflowing with knowledge on every aspect of domestic life, most especially bathing and cosmetics practices to be used in the service of health, fertility, and beauty. The painting is not only a celebration of the lady's beauty and fertility but also of her control over the domestic space that produces it.

As implied by their title, these books of secrets convey a sense of revelation, which the painting shares. In the painting, this sense of revelation is heightened by the dramatic, sumptuous red curtains drawn back to frame the scene. These curtains endow the whole painting with a sense of theatrical artifice and in particular, mark the lady's role as performative. Indeed, the lady appears not a victim but a participant to this exhibitionism as she gazes outward in the direction of the viewer. In an analogous manner to the artist's drawing back of the curtains to reveal the lady, the lady draws back the sheet covering the bath to reveal the signature and therefore identity of the artist. Thus, lady and artist are revealed to be partners in artifice.

The Baths at Fontainebleau: Creating a Mythology of the Bath

Perhaps the most dramatic example of the association between art and bathing in the period is the Appartements des Bains at the Château de Fontainebleau, a large suite of rooms devoted to bathing built under François I.[39] The Château de Fontainebleau, a medieval palace

[39] Little attention was paid to the Appartements des Bains in early literature on Fontainebleau. Louis Dimier, *Le Primatice* (Paris, 1900), 279-84 is concerned with Primaticcio's decorations and F. Herbert, *Le Château de Fontainebleau* (Paris, 1937), 144-56 gives an overview of the suite and its decoration. More recently, -Chevalier (1980), 284-313 discusses the baths and their decoration in her commentary on Père Dan's description of the suite. Chantal Eschenfelder, "Les Appartements des Bains de François Ier à Fontainebleau," *Histoire de l'Art* 19 (1992): 41-8; Eschenfelder "Les Bains de Fontainebleau : Nouveaux Documents sur les Décors du Primatice," *Revue de l'Art* 99 (1993): 45-52; and Janet Cox-Rearick, *The Collection of Francis I: Royal Treasures* (Antwerp: Fonds Mercator, 1996) discuss the baths in-depth.

that François I enlarged and renovated to serve as his primary residence beginning in 1527, became the heart of court life and artistic production during the French Renaissance (Figure 16). François's plans for renovation included the construction of a new wing, which would serve as a center of culture, a place where his role as a great patron of the arts and letters would be demonstrated. On the second floor, the royal library, originally housed at the Château de Blois, was transferred and installed. On the first floor, the Galerie François I celebrated the king's rule through an elaborate decorative program designed and executed by Rosso Fiorentino and Francesco Primaticcio. On the ground floor, just below the gallery, were the bathing apartments. In addition to being located in this locus of art and culture, the bathing apartments were themselves designed as a gallery to house the royal painting collection. The combination of a bathing apartment and an art gallery seems unusual to us today and was in fact, a novelty in the period.[40] Fontainebleau seems to have been the only sixteenth-century princely palace that has a painting collection in its bathing suite. In choosing the baths as the setting for his art collection, François I evoked an antique tradition of installing works of art in baths, thus encouraging the simultaneous enjoyment of intellectual and sensual pleasures. In 1538, the Lyonnais writer Guillaume du Choul wrote a tract *Des Bains et antique exercitations grecques et romaines* dedicated to the king and designed to appeal to his interest in baths and exercise à l'antique. His dedication expresses this relationship between art and bathing clearly:

[40] The combination was not without its perils. Concern for the paintings, which already suffered damage resulting from the bath's humidity, led Henri IV to replace the original works with copies at the end of the century. He housed the originals in his own Cabinet des Peintures. Cox-Rearick, *The Collection of Francis I: Royal Treasures,* 120-5.

> Your baths, Sire, are constructed with such attention and lavishness that, if one looks closely at them, they stand comparison with those of M. Agrippa, considering what beauty for visual pleasure and utility and profit for bodily well-being they brought the ancients.[41]

Clearly, the pleasures of art were closely associated with the pleasures of the bath. The Appartements des Bains offered its visitors a true exaltation of the senses.

Unfortunately, the Appartements des Bains do not survive but plans and contemporary accounts allow us to partially reconstruct them.[42] In particular, Pierre Dan, the minister of the Order of Saint Trinity at Fontainebleau, in his *Le tresor des merveilles de la maison royale de Fontainebleau,* an account of the château, its architecture, decoration, and the royal collection of sculpture and painting it housed, includes the most extensive description of the baths and their decoration.[43] The layout followed antique models; three lounging rooms were followed by three bathing rooms based on familiar antique types, the *spoliarium* (disrobing room), *sudatorium* (hot steaming room), and *frigidarium* (large cool bath) (Figure 17). Drawings and engravings, as well as contemporary descriptions, have given scholars a sense of the suite's elaborate decorative program. Designed by Primaticcio, it combined fresco and stuccowork in the same manner as the

[41] The original French reads, "Vos thermes Sire et voz bains, sont faicts par telle diligence et somptuosité, que, à les bien regarder, peuvent combattre de comparison avecque ceux de M. Agrippe. Parquoy quand ie suis venu à considérer combien de beauté pour le contentement de l'oeil et d'utilité et profit ils apportoyent aux anciens pour la santé du corps." Guillaume du Choul, *Des Bains et Antiques Exercitations Grecques et Romaines* (Lyon: Guillaume Rouillé, 1567), 2-3, quoted in Eschenfelder, "Les Bains de Fontainebleau,"46.
[42] The Appartement des Bains were first modified under Henri IV and later destroyed in 1697 to make room for new living apartments. Eschenfelder, "Les Bains de Fontainebleau," 45.
[43] Pierre Dan, *Le Tresor Des Merveilles de La Maison Royale de Fontainebleau* (Paris: Chez Sebastien Cramoisy, 1642).

Galerie François I (Figure 18).[44] The mythological subjects that formed the subject of this program largely derived from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*. The persons and stories represented appear to have been chosen for their relation to water and bathing and for their erotic potential. The *spoliarium* and *sudatorium* were decorated with the water deities Neptune and Triton along with other gods and nymphs (Figures 19-20).[45] The *frigidarium*, the main bathing room, was decorated with scenes of Jupiter and Callisto, which included a fresco of Diana discovering Callisto's pregnancy in the bath (Figures 21-4).[46] A lunette that likely decorated either the *spoliarium* or *sudatorium* depicts the scene of *Mars and Venus Bathing* (Figure 25). Thus, the decoration was closely related to the actual activities of the baths.

The illusionistic quality of the painting would have further enhanced the elision between the space and activity of the mythic figures depicted and the actual figures occupying the baths. Illusion played an important role in the Galerie François I; its distinctive play of painting and stuccowork combined to deceive the eye. *Venus Frustrated* can serve as an example of this characteristic technique (Figure 26). As Zerner has noted, however, what is unexpected and rather strange in Rosso's work is that the physical contrast between flat paint and modeled stucco

[44] Dan describes a combination of "des ouvrages de painture de stucq" and "des ouvrages de painture de stucq dorés." Dan, *Le Tresor Des Merveilles*, 94-8, quoted in Eschenfelder, "Les Bains de Fontainebleau," 46.
[45] Dan describes "òu se voyent en sa voute plusier figures representans diverses fictions des Anciens. Autour de cette salle sont cinq grands tableaux dont les sujets conviennent au lieu; car au premier sont representez les Dieux des eaux, Neptune, Triton, et plusiers Nimphes et Divinitez, que les Poetes feignent presider sur cet Element." Dan, *Le Tresor Des Merveilles*, 94-8, quoted in Eschenfelder, "Les Bains de Fontainebleau," 46. Dan's description relates to the known drawings included here.
[46] Dan, *Le Tresor Des Merveilles,* 94-8, quoted in Eschenfelder, "Les Bains de Fontainebleau," 46. Again, this description relates to the known drawings included here.

is quite blatant. [47] This collision of techniques attracts attention to the fictional character of the space represented, even when the execution is actually three-dimensional. Thus, Rosso's illusionism has the reverse effect of conventional illusionism, making the real feel artificial instead of the artificial real.

Contemporary descriptions like Pierre Dan's suggest that the decoration of the Appartements des Bains operated in a similar way with a tangle of fresco and stuccowork melding the worlds of myth and reality. Further enhancing this sense of illusion, Primaticcio's designs included illusionistic ceilings, as demonstrated by several drawings. This method had never before been used inside Fontainebleau; the Galerie François I and other important rooms featured coffered wood ceilings. Thus, in the Appartements des Bains, Primaticcio created an entirely immersive experience, making a decisive step towards the height of illusionism achieved in his late masterpieces, the Galerie Ulysses and the chamber of Madame d´Etampes. One can imagine that when the court engaged in the rituals of the bath, they brought the mythic decoration of the Appartements des Bains to life; their highly stylized and ritualized behavior elide with Primaticcio's consciously artificial world filled with mythic and ideal figures. The court's nude bodies, engaged in bathing or socializing, mirrored the mythic nudes on the walls while the steam further blurred the line between surface decoration and reality.

While no sixteenth-century depictions of the Appartements des Bains survive, a contemporary engraving of a bath scene by Jean Mignon after Luca Penni evokes the ambience likely produced by this arrangement (Figure 27). Scholars have debated whether this eroticized view depicting nude women and servants in a room of classical decor with a circular, sunken

[47] Zerner, *Renaissance Art in France*, 75.

bath represents a mythological subject or is a fanciful representation of actual baths.[48] The women depicted, seem at least partly responsible for this scholarly confusion. The women engaged in a veritable catalogue of bathing and cosmetic practices and surrounded by flasks, jars, and dishes to aid them, transform themselves into ideal beauties and the atmosphere into a classic, idyllic setting. The confusion speaks to the blurring of mythology and reality that the decorative program of the Appartements des Bains, combined with the stylized, ritualized behaviors of its inhabitants would have accomplished. In the baths, art and ritual combined to create a living mythology of the court. In Lucca Penni's engraving, it is women whose artifice accomplishes this transformation.

The conscious blending of the space and activity of the mythic figures depicted and the actual figures occupying the baths is especially apparent in Primaticcio's depiction of Venus (Figure 25). The story derives from *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*. In that text, however, the goddess is described as bathing with Mars in an impressive fountain in an architecturally elaborate amphitheatre.[49] A depiction of the scene by Giulio Romano in the Chamber of Amor and Pysche in the Palazzo del Te provides a more conventional approach to depicting the narrative and its architectural setting (Figure 28). In contrast, Primaticcio deliberately represents his Venus in a contemporary setting, specifically entering a wooden circular bath typical of the period. In so doing, Primaticcio brings the ideal figure of beauty and femininity into the contemporary world. A similar tendency is observable in paintings produced by the School of Fontainebleau, which depict Venus at her toilette (Figure 29-30). In these paintings, the goddess

[48] Croizat-Glazer, "Fashioning Femininity," 126.
[49] Esteban Alejandro Cruz, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili: An Architectural Vision from the First Renaissance* vol. II (Xlibris, 2011), 244.

is imagined performing her toilette in a domestic setting. In both paintings, the goddess fashions herself through the means of contemporary bathing and cosmetic practices and admires the ideal she creates in the mirror.

These paintings relate closely to Clouet's *Lady in Her Bath*. In depicting an idealized nude in the bath, Clouet's painting almost certainly evokes the goddesses Venus and Diana, who are intimately connected to bathing and water. Clouet goes even further, however, in combining the ideal and the real. In his painting, the mythic nude meets the specific portrait of the lady at every point. The cupid of *Toilette of Venus* has been transformed into a cherubic boy. The dramatic curtains that frame the scene, a traditional pictorial device which also appear in the Fontainebleau paintings, here serve a functional purpose. Curtains were hung around baths to keep the bath warm and maintain the privacy of the bather. [50] Thus, in Clouet's portrait pictorial symbol coincides with the exterior world in the service of a mythical rhetoric of idealization.

The lady contributes to this process of idealization through her own rituals. The cool, linear almost statuesque style with which the lady's body is depicted evokes the stuccowork of Fontainebleau. Its intentionally artificial character responds to a courtly sense of identity as a manipulable and artful process. The lady's image appears as a product of the combined artifice of bathing and painting, of lady and artist.

The trompe l'oeil effect created by the curtains of Clouet's portrait, which are rendered in painstakingly illusionistic detail, is also interesting when one considers the important role illusionism played in the Appartements des Bains. Descriptions of the Appartements des Bains

[50] Inventories including that of Catherine de Medici list baths with drapery, alerting us to their function. Zerner, *Renaissance Art in France, 204.*

tell us that Primaticcio not only designed stuccowork to frame his frescos but also the royal collection of paintings.[51] Each painting was set into elaborate stucco inquadrature. The Galerie François contains one example of a preexisting oil painting set into the stucco inquadrature. Rosso's *Bachus and Venus* was likely installed in a frame like that found in d'Orbay's drawing of the east wall of the gallery as it appeared in 1782 (Figures 32 and 33). A superimposition of the two gives us a sense of how the paintings in the royal collection may have been exhibited (Figure 34). Numbering among these elaborately framed masterpieces of the collection would have been portraits, including Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* and maybe even a version of his *Mona Vanna*.

Clouet's portrait would likely have hung in a private chamber and fit into a significantly less elaborate design but perhaps one that nonetheless heightened the illusionistic effect produced by the painting. One can imagine it being framed by a pair of sumptuous red curtains, mirroring the painted curtains and further confusing the boundary between painting and life. In the same way that the court's stylized rituals combined with the decorative program of the Appartements des Bains to create a living mythology, the daily rituals performed in this private chamber may have brought Clouet's painting to life. Rather than producing a court mythology, this art and ritual combined to produce a more personal ideal, a self.

[51] Cox-Rearick, *The Collection of Francis I*, 113, 274-5.

CHAPTER 2

Two Ladies in the Bath: Lesbian Behaviors in the Renaissance Bath

Nearly thirty years later, the curtains reopen (Figure 35).[52] This time they reveal not one but two ladies seated in the bath. Together, the two ladies create a near perfect symmetry. Each is displayed in three-quarter view to the waist. They turn their bodies and faces outward to the viewer. Both body and face closely resemble each other, idealized in the same hard, cool, linear almost statuesque manner of Clouet's lady. Their facial features are slightly differentiated but adhere to the same standards of beauty. The ladies are blessed with matching oval faces, elongated foreheads, sharply arched eyebrows, almond-shaped eyes, long, narrow noses, faintly blushing cheeks, and small cherry-red lips. Their hair is coiffed in the same elegant style; only its color differentiates them, one is blonde and the other brunette. The symmetry extends even to the matching pearl earrings dangling from their ears.

Both ladies rest one arm on the edge of the bath. With the other arm, the lady on the left reaches out and firmly but delicately pinches the nipple of the lady on the right between her thumb and forefinger. The lady on the right holds a ring in a similar manner (Figure 35a). Behind both ladies and through the parted bath curtain, is a domestic scene (Figure 35b). Many elements of this scene derive from Clouet's painting; the effect of this interior, however, differs, being more austere and refined than that bustling scene. An elegant woman dressed in red bends intently over her sewing. As in Clouet's painting, a mirror hangs on the wall near her bent head and a table cloaked in a green cloth sits in front of the marble fireplace. The landscape painting

[52] School of Fontainebleau, *Gabrielle D'Estrées and Her Sister in the Bath*, 1594. Oil on wood, 37 8/10 x 49 2/10 in. (96 x 100 cm). Musée du Louvre, Paris.

adorning the mantel in Clouet's painting has been replaced by a painting of a woman, likely a mythological figure, of which only her parted legs are visible (Figures 1e and 35c).

The painting remains a mystery to scholars. The artist and the circumstances of production are unknown. In this case, however, scholars have generally agreed on the identity of the women represented. The identification is derived primarily from a second version of the painting currently at Fontainebleau in which the name "Gabrielle d'Estrées, Duchesse de Beaufort" is painted above the woman on the right and "Julienne Hippolite d'Estrées, Duchesse de Villars" is painted above the woman on the left (Figure 48). Here, the seated servant of the Louvre's painting has been replaced with the wet nurse suckling an infant of Clouet's painting. The name "Cesar Duc de Vendôme" is painted above the child. The presence of the wet nurse and infant in the copy has led scholars to believe the painting alludes to the maternity of Gabrielle and to the birth of Cesar de Vendôme, the illegitimate son of Henry IV. Thus, the painting is traditionally dated to 1594, the year of Cesar's birth. The inscription of the Fontainebleau copy, however, almost certainly dates from a later period. Although Julienne's title is listed as Duchess on the painting, her husband was not given the title of Duke until 1627. While the identification of Gabrielle d'Estrées is convincing based on elements of her biography. I question the identification of Gabrielle's companion as her sister as there is no compelling reason beyond this later inscription to believe it. Moving forward, I will refer to this lady as Gabrielle's companion rather than her sister and when using the official title, I will leave sister in quotes.

Based on the relationship to the Fontainebleau copy, Gabrielle's pregnancy has been used to explain many details of the original painting, including the infamous nipple-pinch. The Louvre's label, for example, reads "the oddly affectionate way in which the sister is pinching Gabrielle d'Estrées' right breast has often been taken as symbolizing the latter's pregnancy with the illegitimate child of Henry IV. This interpretation would seem to be confirmed by the scene of the young woman sewing—perhaps preparing a layette for the coming child—in the background." [53] This basic interpretation has been repeated and elaborated upon by many scholars.[54] The ring held by Gabrielle d'Estrées has been identified as the coronation ring given to Henry IV at his coronation ceremony and which Henry is said to have given to Gabrielle as a promise of marriage after her pregnancy and before her death in 1599.[55] The coronation ring symbolized the king's marriage to the kingdom and was passed down to successive rulers. Scholars have noted how the hand holding the nipple visually corresponds to the hand holding the coronation ring, thereby connecting Gabrielle's alluded-to pregnancy to the patriarchal

[53] Vincent Paumarède, "Gabrielle d'Estrées and One of Her Sisters," *Louvre*, accessed April 9, 2016.
[54] Dimier, *Le Portrait Du XVIe Siècle*, 22-5; Salomon Reinach, "Diane de Poitiers et Gabrielle d'Estrees," *Gazette Des Beaux-Arts* 62, no. 21 (1920): 157-80, 249-66; Jean Adhémar, "French Sixteenth Century Genre Paintings," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 8 (1945): 193; R. H. Wilenski, *French Painting* (Boston: Hale, Cushman and Flint, 1936), 30-1; Béguin, *L'Ecole de Fontainebleau*, 101, 106-7; Châtelet and Thuillier, *French Painting*, 111-2; Roger Trinquet, "L'Allégorie Politique Dans La Peinture Française Au XVIe Siècle: Les Dames Au Bain," *Bulletin de La Société de l'Histoire de l'Art Français*, (1967), 13; Lilian Branshaw and Dorothy M. Jones, "Luxury, Love, and Charity," 40, 43-4; Lynne Lawner, *Lives of the Courtesans: Portraits of the Renaissance* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987), 159-66; André Chastel, *French Art* (Paris: Flammarion, 1994), 234; and Zerner, *Renaissance Art in France*, 213-5. Dimier, Reinach, Adhémar, and Wilenski agree with the identification of the women as Gabrielle d'Estrées and her sister; the remainder agree with the identification and present some form of the pregnancy theory.
[55] In his biography of Gabrielle d'Estrées, Adrien Desclozeaux writes that when Henry "fixed the day of marriage [with Gabrielle], he placed upon her finger the ring with which he himself had wed France on the day of his coronation." Adrien Desclozeaux, *Gabrielle d'Estrées*, trans. Adrien Desclozeaux (London: Arthur L. Humphreys, 1907), 291.

lineage of French kings and the security of the French crown.[56] Read accordingly, the portrait becomes a document of monarchical history.

Such interpretations fail to account for or sometimes actively deny the potentially homoerotic nature of the scene, especially the nipple-pinch. The pregnancy theory begins at least as early as the nineteenth-century collector, bibliophile, and amateur scholar Baron Jérôme Pichon, in whose collection the painting is first securely documented.[57] At the time of his death, Pichon had been working on a study of Gabrielle d'Estrées. It is clear that he passed down his understanding of the painting to the subsequent owner, Gabrielle Goubert de Guestres. After selling the painting to the Louvre in 1937, Goubert de Guestres saw the painting installed and was horrified by the title given to the painting on the museum label, a title she felt was in conflict with Pichon and her own understanding of the work. In an indignant letter to René Huyghe, then curator at the Louvre, she demanded the painting be relabeled:

> I was astonished at the title 'Ladies in the Bath' and hope that this will not be the definitive title—because the subject would be of a symbolism that could appear very light—while this painting is allegorical since it concerns the Duke of Vendôme, son of Henry IV and Gabrielle d'Estrées.[58]

In her objection to the Louvre's chosen title, Goubert de Guestres demonstrates a limited understanding of allegory. Her statement operates on a definition of allegory in which material

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[56] As Lilian Branshaw and Dorothy Jones note, "the hand holding the nipple corresponds to that holding the jeweled ring, which amounts to a visual conceit comparing the nipple to a jewel" Branshaw and Jones, "Luxury, Love, and Charity," 42.

[57] Rebecca Zorach provides the known provenance for the painting, as well as a history of its early interpretation. Rebecca Zorach, "Desiring Things," *Art History* 24, no. 2 (2001): 199-200.

[58] Letter of 18 March 1937 from Madame Goubert de Guestre to René Huyghe, Conservateur au Musée du Louvre, Archives of the Département de Peintures, Dossier Gabrielle d'Estrées, quoted in Zorach, "Desiring Things," 200.

evidence refers beyond itself to a single higher truth. This limited understanding leads her to an almost comic denial of the visual evidence before her. While the painting clearly depicts two ladies in the bath, Goubert de Guestres objects to the Louvre's literalist titling of the work as "Ladies in the Bath" because she worries that viewers will see the work as only that and fail to grasp its higher meaning. In Goubert de Guestres' statement, the "very light" subject matter conflicts with the painting's allegorical meaning.

This notion of allegory does not correspond, however, to that of early modern viewers. For such viewers, the reality of the painting would not be in conflict with the painting's allegorical meaning but would rather be the means by which the allegory functioned. Cristelle Baskins and Lisa Rosenthal's anthology provides a useful model for understanding the complex ways in which early modern allegory functioned. They move away from the iconographic tradition forged by Erwin Panofsky and Ernst Gombrich in which allegory's visible form was regarded primarily as a vehicle for abstract or transcendent meanings. They offer, instead, a "materialist" notion of allegory in which allegories, as images that represent abstract ideas in embodied form, are understood as operating in the physical world of the senses. This materialist interest in allegory foregrounds the concept, well established in Renaissance mythography, that in visual allegory, its tangible aspect is the "body" from which "spirit" emanates. Allegories, in other words, operate within "the dense network of cultural codes in which both actual and represented bodies become sexed, classed, racially defined and rendered desirable or repellant, safe or dangerous, kin or foreign."[59] In the case of the portrait of Gabrielle d'Estrées and her

[59] Cristelle Baskins and Lisa Rosenthal, eds., *Early Modern Visual Allegory: Embodying Meaning* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 1-4.

companion, the allegory is enhanced by the titillating image of the women. Early modern viewers likely would have delighted and even lingered in the manifest, erotic aspect of the painting. The vehemence of Goubert de Guestres' objection suggests that even she recognizes the power of the subject or the "very light" symbolism, worrying that viewers are in danger of losing themselves in it before finding any higher allegorical meaning.

Despite Goubert de Guestres' limited and even misplaced understanding of allegory, her assertions form the basis for nearly all subsequent interpretations of this image. Few scholars question the reading of the nipple-pinch as symbolizing Gabrielle d'Estrées' pregnancy and the coming birth of the Duc de Vendôme or the painting's place in a larger monarchical history.[60] Further, they understand this interpretation as precluding the possibility of a homoerotic reading of the painting. Albert Châtelet and Jacques Thuillier, for example, write, "The meaning is crystal clear; the Duchess's gesture indicates that her sister is soon to have a child."[61] André Chastel is even more emphatic in his denial of the erotic nature of the painting, "Le bain double n'avait rien de scandaleux. La fameuse blonde prèsente gravement la bague qu'elle tient de la main gauche: sa compagne vérifie la promesse d'une naissance . . . Une demonstration exceptionelle de la transparence originale du discours figuré."[62] Henri Zerner agrees that such an interpretation "can hardly be doubted."[63] In this case, the work of interpretation has the effect of downplaying the visual evidence before us, of two women in an intimate and potentially erotic setting. As a materialist notion of allegory stresses, however, it is important to question not

[60] See footnote 2 for the complete list of scholars who support this interpretation.
[61] Châtelet and Thuillier, *French Painting*, 111.
[62] Chastel, *French Art*, 234.
[63] Zerner, *Renaissance Art in France,* 215.

simply what images mean but also how they mean and what they do. The artist's choice to depict two ladies in the bath engaged in a provocative gesture and the effect this choice has on the viewer do not detract from but rather enhance and complicate the work's meaning. Rebecca Zorach and Will Fisher have begun the work of questioning the traditional interpretation of the painting and positing its potentially lesbian intimations.[64] In this chapter, I will further explore how by representing the women in the midst of this erotic gesture, the artist emphasizes their participation in the construction of themselves as a desirable image. The powerful, affective desire they produce by way of this gesture enhances their image as productive, fertile beings.

Images of Lesbianism and Bathing

Scholarly denial of a homoerotic reading is based on the problematic notion that lesbianism was unspeakable and unrepresentable in the period.[65] While references to sodomy in civil, religious, and polemical writings were more common, they were generally succinct, limited

[64] In her analysis of the painting, Zorach explores the intersection of desire for material objects and for bodies. Her notion of imitative or mimetic desire is useful for a homoerotic reading of the work. Zorach, "Desiring Things," 195-212. In his analysis, Will Fisher traces interpretations of the painting from a social and historical perspective, attempting to understand how institutional and popular understandings of the painting have differed and how such understandings have effected the cultural valuation of the image. Will Fisher, "Gabrielle's New Clothes: Cultural Valuations and Evaluations," *Textual Practice* 12, no. 2 (1998): 251–67.

[65] As Valerie Traub has argued, contrary to the silence ascribed to lesbianism in the Renaissance, the early modern period witnessed an unprecedented proliferation of representations of such desire in poetry, fiction, medical texts, travel narratives, theater, and art. See Valerie Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). For more information on the status of lesbianism and its representation in visual and textual sources of the period, see Judith C. Brown, "Lesbian Sexuality in Medieval and Early Modern Europe," in *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, ed. Martin B. Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey (New York: New American Library, 1989), 67–75; James M. Saslow, "Homosexuality in the Renaissance: Behavior, Identity and Artistic Expression," in *Hidden From History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, ed. Martin B. Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey (New York: New American Library, 1989), 90–105; Gary Ferguson, *Queer (Re)Readings in the French Renaissance: Homosexuality, Gender, Culture* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008); Floyd Gray, *Gender, Rhetoric, and Print Culture in French Renaissance Writing*, Cambridge Studies in French 63 (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Maurice Lever, *Les Bûchers de Sodome: Histoire des "Infâmes"* (Paris: Fayard, 1985); and Guy Poirier, L'Homosexualité dans l'Imaginaire de la Renaissance (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1996). For a collection of contemporary writings on homosexuality, see Jeffrey Merrick and Bryant T. Ragan, *Homosexuality in Early Modern France: A Documentary Collection* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

to facts or names. In contrast, references to lesbianism were extensively detailed, even pornographic.[66] Pierre de Brantôme's *Vies des Dames Galantes* is the most notable example.[67] Brantôme, a French soldier, writer, and courtier was raised at the court of Marguerite de Navarre and later played a part at the courts of Henri II, Charles IX, and Henri III. In his writings on the lives of ladies at court, Brantôme describes lesbianism at length, detailing its history and practices more fully and plainly than any other writer of the period.[68] While Brantôme's tales are often invented and exaggerated, they nonetheless reveal something of contemporary conceptions of women. In fact, Brantôme's tendency toward invention and exaggeration reveals the pleasure readers took in imaginative accounts of the sexual lives of women. What ultimately emerges from Brantôme's account of lesbianism is first, that lesbianism was not uncommon at court and second, that it provoked more curiosity—erotic, even prurient—than anxiety in him or his contemporaries. Brantôme utilizes a variety of figurative language and metaphors to imagine women's private sexual lives, including lesbian behavior. Interestingly, they often allude to water and bathing. Fulfilling sexual desire is compared to "quenching" one's thirst or "dousing" oneself with water.[69] In one story, for instance, when a woman becomes aroused and declares

[66] For more on the differing treatment of sodomy and lesbianism in contemporary texts, see the chapter, "Brantôme, Medical Discourse, and the Makings of Pornography" in Gray, *Gender, Rhetoric, and Print Culture*, 156-63. For a collection of writings on sodomy and lesbianism that demonstrate this difference clearly, see Merrick and Ragan, *Homosexuality in Early Modern France*.
[67] Pierre de Bourdeille Brantôme, *Vies Des Dames Galantes* (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1740).
[68] Brantôme is truly exceptional in this regard. His account of lesbianism is included in his section on cuckoldry and is motivated by the question of whether two women engaging in lesbian behaviors can commit adultery and between them, cuckold their husbands. While the pretext of Brantôme's inquiry is misogynistic, his presentation shows him to be much more interested in describing lesbianism as a common, yet relatively unexplored, social and sexual phenomenon. Although he concludes that in most instances, lesbianism is resorted to only as an expedient substitute for heterosexual encounters, his text, nonetheless, intimates that lesbians, more generally speaking, constitute a race apart with their own sexual preferences, practices, and history.
[69] Brantôme, *Vies Des Dames Galantes*, 30-1, 123.

her passion in need of being quenched, the sexual act is imagined as "partaking of that good water that is so sweet." [70]

Images of lesbian coupling appear not only in literary but also in artistic contexts, where they were again associated with water and bathing. As noted in the first chapter, the decoration of François I's Appartements des Bains at Fontainebleau featured many erotic scenes. These included several homoerotic subjects such as a series devoted to the story of Jupiter and Callisto in which the god disguises himself in the feminine form of Diana in order to gain erotic access to Callisto, one of Diana's chaste nymphs (Figures 21-24). The presence of such images suggests that the baths were associated with and even encouraged a sexual freedom that licensed homoerotic desires at court. This association frustrates the argument of scholars, like Chastel, who find nothing erotic in the portrait of Gabrielle d'Estrées and her companion because communal bathing in public and shared bathing in private were common in the period.

If we return to Jean Mignon's engraving after Luca Penni's fanciful representation of the baths, *Women in the Bath*, we see that amidst women engaged in various bathing and cosmetic practices is one couple who engage in lesbian behavior (Figures 27 and 27a). The two ladies closely resemble one another in their classicized bodies, delicate faces, and flowing hair. Their motions also create a bodily symmetry; each extends an arm to touch the other's genitalia. Interestingly, the women's bodies do not turn toward one another but rather turn outward toward the viewer so that both their classically beautiful bodies and provocative action are made available for the viewer's consumption. Further, their faces are not turned toward one another but rather angled to behold their reflection in a mirror held up for that purpose by a nearby woman.

[70] Ibid., 30-1.

Rather than delighting in their intimate relationship, they appear to delight in the image they make of it. Indeed, the real pleasure of their interaction lies not in the arousal occasioned by their touching but rather in their artful posing and staging of their reflection. Thus, Luca Penni equates the pair's intimate touching with the cosmetic and bathing practices of the nearby women, which alike transform them into beautiful and desirable images. Within his engraving of them, the women exercise their own power to fashion themselves into images, most through the artifice of bathing and this pair through the artifice of seduction.

If one were to imagine the image reflected in these ladies' mirror, it would closely resemble the portrait of Gabrielle d'Estrées and her companion, featuring two outward-facing ladies who mirror each other both in likeness and in pose. Like these ladies, Gabrielle d'Estrées and her companion do not appear absorbed by the homoerotic behavior they participate in but rather direct their attention outward to the viewer. They appear even more estranged, at a greater distance from one another and stiffly facing the viewer. The companion's nipple-pinch seems disassociated, less a passionate or even gentle caress and more a gesture of display. Gabrielle d'Estrées and her companion appear more invested in exercising their power to create a stimulating image, to affect the viewer. As in Clouet's portrait, where the cool, hard, linear, statuesque style in which the lady is represented, emphasizes her as a product of the shared artifice of bathing and painting, here the consciously artificial style in which the women are portrayed emphasizes their participation in rendering themselves images, desirable objects. In both, the theatrical red curtains that frame the scene add to the sense that the ladies perform their identities. Like Clouet's lady who participates in the production of her image through the artifice

of bathing, Gabrielle d'Estrées and her companion participate in the production of their image through the artifice of seduction.[71]

The Artifice of Seduction: The Desirer as Mirror of the Desired

In contemporary texts, erotic attraction itself is often compared to the visual arts. In the Aristotelian understanding of sensory experience, the sensory organs were thought to receive material impressions of sensible things.[72] Thus, when an animal perceives an object, the sense organ (in the case of visual perception, the eye) is impressed with the form of the object it perceives. In Renaissance commentaries on such classical theories, the impression created on the sensory organ is often described in terms of the visual or plastic arts. In Marsilio Ficino's commentary, for example, he writes: "The lover engraves the figure of the beloved on his own soul."[73] In a letter to Gabrielle d'Estrées, Henry IV expresses his love for her in just such terms: he complains of the inadequacy of a portrait of her; he is competent to judge, he writes, because she is painted in his heart, his eyes, and his soul.[74] This notion of desire inverts the normal paradigm by which female objects of desire are passive to male's active desiring. It is the object of desire that impresses the desirer and who, therefore, performs the role of the artist in this

[71] Mary Pardo discusses artifice as seduction in the paintings of Titian. She suggests that during the Renaissance, artifice itself was a vehicle for the erotic and locates the erotic dimension of Renaissance figurative art in the very strategy of its making. Mary Pardo, "Artifice as Seduction in Titian," in *Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, Texts, Images*, ed. James Grantham Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 55-89. For similar arguments, see Rona Goffen, *Titian's Women* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).
[72] For an overview of Aristotle's theory of perception, see Stephen Everson, *Aristotle on Perception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
[73] Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, trans. Sears Reynolds Jayne (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1985): 57, quoted in Zorach, "Desiring Things," 10.
[74] M. Capeskeue, *Gabrielle d'Estrées et La Politique de Henri IV* (Paris: Amyot, 1859): 184, quoted in Zorach, "Desiring Things," 10.

metaphor. In Sperone Speroni's *Dialogo d'Amore*,[75] a dialogue on the philosophy of love written as an imagined exchange between the learned courtesan, Tullia d'Aragona, her suitor, Bernardo Tasso, and their mutual friend, Grassi, Tullia offers a metaphorical account of amorous attraction based on the notion of self-portraiture. Asked to explain how it is that lovers reciprocate affection, Tullia describes the beloved's relation to the lover as in some sense specular and passive, but also asymmetrical and productive, like that of the painter to his work. In a yet deeper sense, love inverts natural laws of precedence and causation, and thus exhibits the fruitful arbitrariness of artifice. The passive, "natural" love object rewrites her assigned role:

> The lover . . . is properly a portrait of that which he loves . . . for 'to love' is not as the word means, that is, to make or effect something, but it is rather a certain passion; and to be loved is not a passive but an active verb . . . and I dare say that as the painter portrays the person's appearance with colors and with his artifice; and the mirror eliminated by the sun portrays not only the appearance, but the movement of the one mirrored; so the thing that is loved, by means of love's stylus, portrays itself and all that belongs to it, soul and body, in the lover's face and in his heart.[76]

Thus, the woman who is properly the object of love inverts the natural order and takes on the role of the artist, fashioning a portrait of herself in her lover who is a mirror that portrays both the "appearance" and "movement of the one mirrored."

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[75] Speroni's dialogue was translated into French by Claude Gruget in 1551 and served as a formative model for early modern French dialogues on the philosophy of love. Reinier Leushuis, "Sight, Speech, and Dialogue in the Débat de Folie et d'Amour, or «Quel Genre de Dialogue Pour Louise Labé?»," in *Esprit Généreux, Esprit Pantagruélicque": Essays By His Students in Honor of François Rigolot*, ed. Reinier Leushuis and Zahi Zalloua (Geneva: Droz, 2008), 126.

[76] Sperone Speroni, "Dialogo d'Amore," in *Trattatisti Del Cinquecento*, ed. Mario Pozzi, vol. 25 (Milan: Riccardo Ricciardi Editore, 1978): 545-6, quoted in Pardo, "Artifice as Seduction," 57.

In their portrait, Gabrielle d'Estrées and her companion engage in image making as Tullia describes it. As in the Luca Penni engraving, where the ladies appear transformed by their erotic action into exact mirrors of each other, the ladies also provide mirrors to one another. As in Tullia's metaphor, the ladies, as objects of desire, impress an image of themselves onto each other, a portrait or a mirror that captures both their "appearance" and "movement." Thus, in their erotic act, the ladies participate in an act of self-portraiture.

The Power of Art to Arouse: The Viewer as Mirror of the Painting

The mirroring effect also affects the viewer. During the Renaissance, a lively debate on the power of art to arouse constituted part of a larger philosophical discussion concerning the very nature of visual experience as it related to erotic attraction and desire.[77] The basis of arguments affirming the power of art to arouse date back to classical accounts of manmade effigies so natural and beautiful as to arouse onlookers. The most famous of these effigies was a statue, Praxiteles' Cnidian *Aphrodite,* which bore the stain of a young man's sexual assault.

This notion was based on the theory of imitative or mimetic desire that appears in several important Renaissance texts. Leonardo da Vinci, for instance, provides an account of the workings of visual art on the spectator to produce an attitude of imitation:

> That which is included in narrative painting ought to move those who behold and admire them in the same way as the protagonist of the narrative is moved. So if the narrative shows terror, fear or flight or, indeed, grief, weeping and lamentation, or pleasure, joy

[77] For information on this debate, see Pardo, "Artifice as Seduction," 60-8, and the chapter, "Titian, Ovid, and Erotic Illustration," in Carlo Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 77-95. On the place of the erotic in Renaissance art and culture, more generally, especially as seen through Pietro Aretino's *I Modi*, see Bette Talvacchia, *Taking Positions: On the Erotic in Renaissance Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

> and laughter and similar states, the minds of the beholders should move their limbs in such a way as to make it seem that they are united in the same fate as those represented in the narrative painting.[78]

Thus, passions and emotions depicted in visual art are meant to elicit the same passions and emotions in the beholder. In another text, Leonardo relates the affective power of painting specifically to erotic desire. He writes that painters "have painted such libidinous and wanton acts that they incited spectators to indulge in these same activities."[79]

Sixteenth-century theologians often cite a passage from Terence's *The Eunuch* to demonstrate the evil effects of lascivious pictures.[80] One of the characters, the young Chaerea, disguises himself as a eunuch in order to enter the house of Pamphila, the young woman he loves. The girl is described as disrobing and preparing herself for the bath. While waiting for the bath to be drawn, Chaerea's eyes fall upon a picture of Jove and Danaë hanging on the wall. In this mythological episode, Jove transforms himself into shower of golden light capable of entering a window in order to ravish the imprisoned Danaë It is this image that incites Chaerea to ravish the girl in imitation of Jove; "I began to look at [the painting] myself, and the fact that [Jove] had played a similar game long ago made me all the more excited . . . was I, a mere mortal not to imitate him? Imitate I would and gladly."[81] Due to the wide dissemination of this story and theologian's condemnation of it, the scene of love between Jove and Danaë became the very prototype of the image created to excite the beholder sexually in the sixteenth century. The

[78] Leonardo Da Vinci, *Leonardo on Painting: An Anthology of Writings*, ed. Martin Kemp and Margaret Walker (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 220, quoted in Zorach, "Desiring Things," 201.
[79] Ibid., 27, quoted in Zorach, "Desiring Things," 202.
[80] Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*, 77.
[81] Terence, "The Eunuch," in *Terence*, ed. John Barsby, Loeb Classical Library 22 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 379.

portrait of Gabrielle d'Estrées and her companion likely evoked this story for the viewer. As noted, the painting contains a painting within itself. The landscape of Clouet's painting that hung on the far wall over the fireplace mantel has been explicitly replaced by a depiction of the loosely draped legs of a nearly nude woman (Figure 35c). The fragmentary legs resemble those of Danaë, particularly in Titian's depiction of the subject (Figure 36). The presence of this painting within the painting coupled with the depiction of Gabrielle d'Estrées and her companion in a state of undress in the bath, recalling Pamphila's position in the story, would have brought to mind Terence's story for the viewer. Thus, Terence's story would have provided the viewer a way of understanding the effect of the larger work. The viewer, like Chaerea, is meant to be aroused by the painting and the erotic gesture it depicts, perhaps even to the point of being incited to imitate the gesture.

Brantôme devotes an entire section of *Vies Des Dames Galantes* to describing the effect of erotic images on women, images like Guilio Romano's engravings of Pietro Aretino's *I Modi* which depicted couples in sixteen positions of sexual intercourse and which circulated widely at court, especially, according to Brantôme in the hands of women.[82] In a particularly illustrative example, Brantôme describes an instance of an erotic image inspiring imitation. In an imagined gallery at the house of the Count of Chasteauvilain, Seigneur Adjacet:

> A group of ladies and their servants had gone to view this beautiful house when their gaze fell upon some lovely and rare paintings in the gallery. To the ladies was presented a very beautiful painting in which were represented beautiful, naked ladies who were in the

[82] Brantôme, *Vies Des Dames Galantes*, 28-32. For more on Pietro Aretino's *I Modi*, see Talvacchia, *Taking Positions*; and Lynne Lawner, *I Modi: The Sixteen Pleasures, An Erotic Album of the Italian Renaissance* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1988).

> bath, who touched each other, stroked each other, handled and rubbed each other, mixed together and patted each other, and what's more, arranged their hair [groomed themselves] so gently and so delicately as to show everything that even a cold recluse or hermit would be warmed and stirred thereat; and this is why one great lady, as I have heard, losing herself in the painting, said to her lover [her 'serviteur'], turning toward him as if maddened by this rage of love: 'we've stayed here too long; let's get into the carriage right away and go back to my rooms, I can't contain my ardor; we have to go douse it; it has burned too long.' Thus departing, she went with her servant to partake of that good water that is so sweet without sugar, and that her servant gave her from his little cruet [burette].[83]

The painting Brantôme describes is not unlike Luca Penni's *Women in the Bath.* As in that scene where the women's lesbian coupling is visually equated to the bathing and cosmetic practices of the nearby women, in Brantôme's description of the painting's action, stroking, rubbing, and mixing together are equated with grooming and arranging. Further, that the final purpose of this action is to "show everything" to the viewer suggests that like Luca Penni's ladies and Gabrielle d'Estrées and her companion after them, the women's actions are finally motivated by a desire to create an image of themselves for a viewer. This image is so titillating that the great lady viewing

[83] Brantôme, *Vies Des Dames Galantes*, 31. The French reads: "une troupe de dames avec leurs serviteurs étant allés voir cette belle maison, leur veue s'addressa sur de beaux et rares tableaux qui estoient en ladicte galerie. A elles se présenta un tableau fort beau, ou estoient représentées forces belles dames nues qui estoient aux bains, qui s'entre-touchoient, se palpoient, se manioient et frottoient, s'entre-mesloient, se tastonnoient, et, qui plus est, se faisoient le poil tant gentiment et si proprement en monstrant tout, qu'une froide recluse ou ermite s'en fut eschauffée et esmeue; et c'est pourquoy une dame grande, dont j'ay ouy parler et cogneue, se perdant en ce tableau, dit à son serviteur, en se tournant vers luy, comme enragée de cette rage d'amour: 'C'est trop demeuré icy: montons en carosse promptement, et allons en mon logis, car je ne puis plus contenir cette ardeur; il la faut aller esteindre: c'est trop bruslé.' Et ainsi partit, et alla avec son serviteur prendre de cette bonne eau qui est si douce sans sucre, que son serviteur lui donna de sa petite burette."

the painting is not only aroused but losing herself in the image, incited to engage in an imitative sexual act. The act that she and her lover engage in is even imagined in terms of bathing in exact imitation of the painting; they "douse" the lady's desire by "partake[ing] of that good water that is so sweet without sugar."

In Gabrielle d'Estrées and her companion's portrait, the presence of a mirror on the far wall of the room suggests that the viewer is intended to mirror the women in precisely this fashion (Figure 35d). In Luca Penni's engraving, the ladies turn outward to delight in the reflection of themselves that they create in the nearby mirror. Here, Gabrielle d'Estrées and her companion turn outward as if to delight in the reflection of themselves that they create in the viewer. As in Renaissance theory of mimetic desire generally and Brantôme's story more specifically, the viewers' desire to imitate the women's erotic action transform them into an exact mirror of the painting. The shadowy mirror in the background of Gabrielle d'Estrées and her companion's portrait allows viewers to imagine themselves as the ladies' reflection. The audience is meant to provide yet another mirror to Gabrielle d'Estrées and her companion.

This notion of mimetic desire has an inherently homoerotic character in that the desirer takes on the form of the thing desired, even its gender. In the images of lesbian coupling in the Appartements de Bains at Fontainebleau, for instance, the desirer undergoes a gender transformation to unite with the object of its desire. In the Jupiter and Callisto series, Jupiter takes on the feminine form of Diana in order to seduce Callisto. In Primaticcio's design Jupiter appears already in the guise of Diana and engaged in the act of seduction. As Jupiter leans close to kiss the reclining Callisto and fondle her breast, their bodies mirror one another and their legs

become difficult to distinguish so far has the desirer come to resemble the object of his desire (Figure 21). Interestingly, even in Primaticcio's depiction of Mars and Venus bathing, a heterosexual encounter, Venus appears to take on the form of Mars as she approaches (Figure 25). Her body is unusually muscled and even her face, boyish. In his commentary, Marsilio Ficino expands on the gender transformative power of desire: "Lovers give themselves up to beloveds so far that they try to be changed into them altogether, and to reproduce them in words as well as deeds. But who would not become effeminate from constant imitation of boys and girls?"[84] In this way, desire, even heterosexual desire, assumes a homoerotic character. Brantôme's story illustrates this; even as it ends in a heterosexual encounter with a male servant or lover, the encounter is represented as being inspired by and taking the form of the painting's homoerotic subject.

The Erotic and the Maternal: Engendering Images

In traditional interpretations of the painting, the erotic is generally viewed as being in conflict with the maternal so that the pregnancy theory precludes the possibility of a homoerotic reading. In fact, the lesbian gesture of Gabrielle d'Estrées and her companion's portrait is associated with a kind of queer productivity, which links the erotic and maternal. Following Speroni's notion of desire and love as a type of self-portraiture, the ladies, themselves objects of desire, invert the natural orders of precedence and causation to take on the role of artist and to

[84] Ficino, *Commentary*, 123, quoted in Zorach "Desiring Things," 10. Katherine Crawford has discussed how the homosocial model of French Neoplatonists and Ficino's model, in particular, was continually frustrated by the problem of corporeality. See the chapter, "Neoplatonism and the Making of Heterosexuality," in Katherine Crawford, *The Sexual Culture of the French Renaissance* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 109-51.

reproduce their image in the desiring subject. They reproduce their own image both within and beyond the confines of the painting, in each other and in the viewer.

This reproductive potential finally relates to biological reproduction. In fact, the Aristotelian theory that governs perception also governs reproduction. In the same way that objects impress their form onto sensory organs and the imagination, the paternal seed impresses its form unto matter in the uterus. The ladies' power to reproduce images of themselves is then, connected to their biological potential to reproduce.

The nipple-pinch represents the ultimate union of the erotic and the maternal. It at once stimulates erotic desire and also alludes to Gabrielle's pregnancy and the coming birth of the Duc de Vendôme, calling attention to the woman as a fertile, pregnant being. In Rebecca Zorach, *Blood, Milk, Ink, Gold: Abundance and Excess in the French Renaissance*, Rebecca Zorach examines figures of the productive female body that represent concepts like Nature, the Earth, and finally, she argues, France. She specifically traces the iconography of the breast, whether gushing or multiplying, which resonates with notions of France as endlessly productive.[85] Take, for instance, the personification of *Nature* by Niccolò Tribolo (Figure 37). The sculpture was sent to François I around 1529 through the Florentine Battista della Palla. The gift was likely commissioned specifically for the French court; it is in keeping with François I's taste for erotic and iconographically recondite subjects. The image also relates to the visual rhetoric of Fontainebleau, which strongly emphasizes femininity and natural abundance, identifying one with the other. This visual rhetoric pervades the decoration of Fontainebleau as seen in

[85] See her third chapter, "Milk," in Rebecca Zorach, *Blood, Milk, Ink, Gold: Abundance and Excess in the French Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005): 83-134.

Benvenuto Cellini's *The Nymph at Fontainebleau* (Figure 38). It is especially ubiquitous in the Galerie François Premier where stuccoes of female nudes are represented holding baskets and garlands of fruit (Figures 39-40). The rhyming of breasts with fruit and the entangling of limbs with vegetation underscores the association of femininity with natural abundance. Zorach argues that images of the productive female body such as these, which often occur in political or nationalistic contexts, were essential in consolidating the identity of the early nation.[86] For "Nature" and "Nation" share a root in the Latin verb *nascio*, to be born. In this visual rhetoric, "Mother" Earth was associated with "Mother" France in her endless productivity.

Within the iconography of the breast, a gesture reoccurs that Zorach identifies as the "breast-press."[87] In Cellini's famous and enigmatic salt cellar in which the figures of Earth and Sea meet to express the abundance of France, the figure of Earth is represented pressing her own breast as if to bring forth lactation (Figures 41 and 41a). This gesture occurs in various contexts, in the stuccowork of the Galerie François Premier and also in fountains (Figures 42-4) In such images, the breast is figured as an inexhaustible source, which the woman herself stimulates. Cellini's salt cellar is an excellent example of the materiality of allegory; eroticism plays an important role in creating its allegory of abundance. It is the eroticism of the figures, their lithe forms and entangled limbs, that powerfully conveys the meeting of Earth and Sea that produces the abundance of France, which the cellar conveys in both its form and contents. Thus, viewers' delight in the material and erotic enhances the allegory. Within this larger allegory, it is easy to understand how the titillating effect of the "breast-press" enhances the symbolic significance of

[86] Ibid., 85-6.
[87] Ibid., 92.

the gesture as an allusion to lactation and therefore, abundance. The erotic plays an important role in conveying the allegory and making it effective for the viewer.

In Gabrielle d'Estrées and her companion's portrait, the eroticism of the nipple-pinch enhances the image of Gabrielle as a fertile, pregnant being. As in Cellini's salt cellar the titillating effect of the nipple-pinch enhances the symbolic significance of the gesture as an allusion to lactation and therefore, abundance. Through the nipple-pinch, which stimulates the desire and imagination of the viewer, Gabrielle engenders images of herself in the viewer just as she engenders images of herself through childbirth. This powerful productivity is ultimately linked to the nation by the equation of Gabrielle's nipple to the coronation ring in the women's parallel gestures of display.

CHAPTER 3

Many Ladies in Many Baths: Promiscuous Copying

A number of variants and copies of Clouet's *Lady in Her Bath* and the Louvre's *Gabrielle d'Estrées and Her "Sister" in the Bath* rework and recombine elements of the two paintings in fascinating ways. Some feature a single lady in the bath and closely follow the model of Clouet's portrait (Figures 45-7). Others represent two ladies in the bath and follow the formula of the Louvre portrait (Figures 48-51). The background of these paintings has changed, however, to include elements of Clouet's painting, the wet nurse, the young female servant, and elements of the furniture and decoration. Another group of paintings depicts women nude at their toilette (Figures 52-4). These paintings closely relate to Clouet's composition. All feature a lady represented half-length and in three-quarter view. She is seated in a similar pose in the foreground, which opens to a domestic space in the background. Again, however, details of the painting have been altered.

For the most part, scholars have neglected these copies and variants. The emphasis on uncovering the specific identities of the women depicted has led scholars to focus on one painting or another rather than address the paintings as a group or nude portraiture as a potential genre. Ann Plogsterth was the first scholar to acknowledge the existence of these copies and to create a comprehensive catalogue.[88] Plogsterth's dissertation presents an unprecedented number of copies and variants, some well-documented and photographed and others lost and traced only through minor references in inventories and catalogues. In all, she documents seventeen

[88] Ann Plogsterth, "The Institution of the Royal Mistress and the Iconography of Nude Portraiture in Sixteenth-Century France" (PhD diss, Columbia University, 1991).

examples of the single bather composition, twenty-five of the double bather composition, and nine of the toilette composition as well as other related works. This chapter deals only with the best-documented and photographed works but considers them as examples of a larger genre. Indeed, Plogsterth believes that a number of the paintings have been lost or destroyed so that even the significant number of copies and variants that she traces is only part of a larger genre.[89] While Plogsterth acknowledges the unusual number of copies, her study demonstrates the difficulty in establishing the relationship between these copies in terms of attribution, chronology, and other factors. Ultimately, she remains unable to provide a satisfying explanation for the existence of the many copies and variants or for their curious reworking and recombination of the various elements of the original paintings. Her difficulty lies in part, because despite acknowledging the existence of these copies, she, like scholars before her, attempts to explain the paintings by identifying the women represented. The existence of these copies, however, frustrates attempts to understand the paintings through any individual's likeness or biography.

[89] Ibid., 41-2, 92. I agree with Plogsterth that the standardized format of these portraits and the significant number of copies and variants that survive point to the existence of a larger genre that is now partially lost. It is important to recognize as Henri Zerner has, however, that scholars have tended to exaggerate the number of paintings lost or destroyed in order to explain the dearth of sixteenth-century French painting, especially when compared to the great painting traditions of Italy and the Low Countries. This hypothesis that lays the blame on destruction begins as early as the 1904 exhibition of French Primitives but is not well-founded. Protestant iconoclasm did as much damage in the Low Countries as in France. There was no reason for the Revolution to target the painting of the sixteenth century more than that of the seventeenth. In short, despite known destruction, there is still a profound and fundamental difference between the output of France when compared to Italy and the Low Countries. Easel painting was not central to Renaissance culture in France in the same way; instead the strength of French art rested on a whole range of artistic crafts including architecture and monumental decoration such as mural painting, sculpture, stained glass painting, and tapestries. See the sub-chapter, "The Dearth of Sixteenth-Century Painting," in Henri Zerner, *Renaissance Art in France: The Invention of Classicism* (Paris: Flammarion, 2003), 237-46.

Studying the paintings as part of a larger group changes our understanding of their meaning and function. When scholars examine the paintings individually and attempt to link them to the identity of a specific woman, the paintings become the products of the individual biographies of the women. The unusual details of Clouet's *Lady in Her Bath* and the Louvre's *Gabrielle d'Estrées and Her "Sister"* have been regarded as evidence of the paintings' specific and highly circumstantial nature. When studied as a group, however, the paintings can no longer be regarded as anomalies. Rather, they speak to larger issues of women's identity and sexuality in the period and the unusual details require explanation within the larger culture.

Viewed through the traditional scholarly lens, Clouet's *Lady in Her Bath* is often regarded as an exception in his oeuvre. Clouet is known for establishing the standard formula for French portraiture. Throughout the sixteenth century, members of the French court represented themselves using this "Clouet formula" with little variation. If studied in isolation, *Lady in Her Bath* is understood as a break with this formula, a highly unusual painting commissioned by and produced for a specific patron. The existence of such copies and variants suggests, however, that in *Lady in Her Bath*, Clouet may have created a formula of representation not unlike those of his standard portraits.

The little that is known about the paintings attribution, dating, and circumstances of production make it difficult to determine whether or not they were produced by a single workshop. The significant amount of time elapsed between the Clouet portrait and the Louvre portrait suggests otherwise. Additionally, while the portraits are all painted in oil, the support

varies, between panel and canvas.[90] The dimensions of the copies are comparable, though generally larger than those of the originals.[91] The single bather compositions retain a vertical format and the double bather compositions a horizontal format. More than their material format, however, the similarity of style and iconography, particularly the reuse of motifs, is striking and suggests a fundamental interrelationship between the group. The copies and variants share an equivalence of pose and a standard configuration of body, accoutrements, and background space. Further, the ladies' bodies are represented in precisely the same manner. They are remarkably standardized down to the position and proportion of the arms, the orientation of the breast, and the slight turn of the torso. This similarity suggests that the artist did not draw his figures from life but rather copied directly from one painted figure to the next or from a pattern drawing. Only the faces are differentiated and even the individual identity of these are obscured by the process of idealization.

This standardization suggests that the group of portraits operated in a similar way to Clouet's more standard court portraits. As in those portraits, ladies must have found in them a formula for representation that expressed some sense of common or shared identity.

Copying as Performative

Court art in the period had a distinctly performative character. As Zerner's concept of a lived mythology emphasizes, life at the French court was profoundly stylized and ritualized, even affected. Members of the court were highly conscious of their roles, which they performed

[90] While the majority of paintings attributed directly to François Clouet are completed on panel, some of the paintings believed to be by his workshop and followers are completed on canvas.
[91] For the exact dimensions, see illustrations at the end. Some dimensions are unavailable but those that are give a sense of the group.

through increasingly elaborate court ritual and behavior. Art objects played an important role in this mythology, sometimes serving as a backdrop or prop to these performances but also carrying performative power themselves.

Evelyn Welch has explored the concept of the court as a "social theater" whose participants had an acute awareness of protocol and standing.[92] Examining the role of the court artist through the lens of theater, she finds that it relates more closely to the role of other cultural performers, specifically musicians and jesters, than any artistic predecessors. For Welch, the portraitist came closest to these cultural performers as portraiture brought patron and artist into direct contact. In particular, the ability to provide a quick sketch or a drawn likeness became increasingly in demand among sixteenth-century aristocrats. Welch argues that artists' development of skill in drawing portraits quickly was a way of making their process of making a spectacle in itself: "The rapid, quick-fire drawing may have been the temporary, ephemeral creations that reconstructed the painter as an entertainer."[93] The Clouets were responsible for this development in France, popularizing the drawn portrait as a finished product in itself. These portraits were then copied and circulated amongst the court through portrait albums. This conception of art-making as performative or ritualized, however, can be applied not only to their drawings but also to their work more broadly. The systematic use of drawing, which allowed the Clouets to record the physiognomy of numerous individuals by means of a repeated formula, was intimately linked to their development of the standard portrait in all mediums. The repetition of

[92] Evelyn Welch, "Painting as Performance in the Italian Renaissance Court," in *Artists at Court: Image-Making and Identity, 1300-1550*, ed. Stephen J. Campbell (Boston: Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 2004), 20.
[93] Ibid., 32.

this formula in drawing and in painting was a ritualized means through which individual sitters could perform their identities in a manner comparable to any of the various rituals of aristocratic life.

Copying, Mechanical Reproduction, and the Circulation of Motifs

The manner in which these portraits are copied elicits comparison to the new technology of mechanical reproduction, particularly prints and engravings. Zerner has written about the importance of prints to the School of Fontainebleau and to the dissemination and circulation of its style and motifs.[94] The technology of mechanistic reproduction not only created new, more reproductive mediums like prints and engravings but also affected existing mediums. Even in their painted form, the Clouets' portraits manifest a demand for repetition and standardization that relates to mechanistic reproduction. This demand first motivated the Clouets to embrace drawing. By the end of the century, engravers Thomas de Leu (1560-1612) and Lèonard Gautlier (1561-1641) transferred the Clouet formula into print, diffused it more widely, and passed it on to the next century. The tradition of portrait engraving continued, reaching its height in the work of Robert Nanteuil (1623-1678). The standard half-length, three-quarter view of the Clouet portrait lent itself to print and the portrait engravings of these artists became incredibly popular as a means for men and women to represent themselves (Figures 55-7). Even in painting, however, the Clouet formula seemed to anticipate the possibility of such reproduction and its transfer into the medium of print seemed almost inevitable.

[94] For a discussion of the role of prints see chapter 4, "The Lessons of Fontainebleau," in Zerner, *Renaissance Art in France: The Invention of Classicism*; Henri Zerner, *The School of Fontainebleau: Etchings and Engravings*, trans. Stanley Baron (London: Thames & Hudson, 1969); *The French Renaissance in Prints from the Bibliothèque Nationale de France* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 1994); and chapter 4, "Ink," in Rebecca Zorach, *Blood, Milk, Ink, Gold: Abundance and Excess in the French Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

Specifically, the manner in which this group of portraits is copied and the way in which their motifs circulate bears a striking resemblance to prints. Amongst the copies and variants, there exist a few standard formulas derived from Clouet's *Lady in Her Bath* and the Louvre's *Gabrielle d'Estrées and Her "Sister."* Within these basic formulas of composition, pose, and general appearance of the model, individual identities are slotted in. The paintings' backgrounds are composed through the reworking and recombining of various motifs in a manner analogous to the circulation of motifs in prints. Zerner's study of the prints after the decoration of the Galerie François I provides an example of such circulation.[95] The engravers Antonio Fantuzzi, Jean Mignon, and the mysterious Master I♀V famously reproduced the Galerie's frescoes and stuccowork. In these graphic reproductions, however, the frames with their elaborate stuccowork have been disassociated from their original compositions. Zerner argues that this disassociation results from the engravings having been derived from preparatory sketches of the Galerie rather than its finished decoration. In these preparatory sketches, each fresco was drawn separately and the decorative stucco frame was elaborated on other sheets. As a result, the prints feature frames that are empty or sometimes filled with landscapes or other compositions not originating from the Galerie François I. When Antono Fantuzzi reproduced the framing elements surrounding Rosso's Danaë, for example, he replaced the original composition with a landscape (Figures 58 and 59). The ornamental detail is immediately recognizable, especially the three female figures fused together into a composite representation of the three graces and holding aloft a basket of fruit, but now serves to enhance the landscape's sense of abundance.

[95] Zerner, *Renaissance Art in France*, 132-9.

The initial disassociation of ornament and composition, stemming from the printmaker's reliance on the separate preparatory sketches, seems to have encouraged further exchange and circulation of motifs in the prints. In the Galerie François I, the motifs of the frame were intimately if elusively connected to the composition. In the engravings, however, the framing elements were removed from their original associations and engravers arranged and rearranged them with a certain freedom. Jacques Androuet Ducerceau was a printer-publisher whose frequent appropriation of the work of other artists is an example of the copying that was endemic to early modern print production. For example, Ducerceau appropriated the motifs of Fantuzzi's engraving after Rosso's composition for the frontispiece of the French translation of *Roland Furieux* (Figure 60). In other prints, Ducerceau uses the motifs to frame not a composition but yet another frame, removing the central composition altogether and multiplying ornament upon ornament (Figure 61). In these examples, Ducerceau not only inserts the motifs into new contexts but also rearranges them and recombines them with new elements. On the cover of *Roland Furieux,* the three graces are present on either side of the title page but have been inserted into a different ornamental scheme with new vegetation, figures of revelry, and decorative cartouches. Thus, through graphic homogenization, the reduction of size, and the dislocation of the semantic context, the engravers performed a transformation that put Rosso's inventions into circulation as an ornamental repertoire. It is notable that the motifs themselves do not change but are reworked and recombined as one might expect given the mechanistic nature of their reproduction.

This kind of exchange also governs the motifs of the portraits. Rather than altering the composition to include entirely original motifs or significantly altered or reinterpreted motifs, the

same motifs recur throughout the paintings reproduced almost exactly but inserted into new contexts. The three versions of the single bather composition closely follow Clouet's composition (Figures 45-7). A pair of dramatic red curtains frames each scene. The right side of the painting is occupied by the lady in the bath, represented half-length in three quarter view and turning outward toward the viewer. On the left side, the curtains are pulled back to reveal a domestic scene. All three versions retain the key elements of the scene, the young boy reaching for a bowl of fruit in the foreground, the wet nurse nursing a swaddled infant in the middle ground, and the young maid retrieving a kettle of water from the fire in the background. Even the details of the far background, the windows looking out onto a natural scene, the mirror hanging on the wall, and the embroidered chair are all repeated.

As noted, the body of the lady is repeated very closely in all of the compositions. The body's positioning, the proportion of the arms, the orientation of the breasts, and the slight turn of the torso are all repeated. This remarkable similarity suggests that the artists of the copies painted the forms not from life but rather copied directly from one painted figure to the next or from a pattern drawing. There are slight differences in the depiction of the lady's form. In the Musée des Arts Décoratifs version in Paris, the lady's body appears harder and more muscled, with deeper shadows defining the musculature. In the version from the Musée Condé in Chantilly, the lady's flesh appears softer and more delicate with less definition to the muscles and a softer finish to the outlines. These differences can likely be accounted for by the differing quality of the artist. In general, the lady's bodies conform to the same ideal of beauty and likely

derive from the same model. There are, however, some significant alterations that cannot be accounted for in this way.

The faces of the ladies, though idealized, differ significantly enough to suggest that they are meant to represent different women. In certain cases, the awkward relationship between the ladies' heads and bodies suggests that the artists of the copies inserted the differing heads onto already modeled bodies. This is especially apparent in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs version, where the less accomplished artist has failed to match the proportions of the head to those of the body. Beyond individualizing the ladies' facial features, the artists of the copies also use different hairstyles and adornments that give an individual character to the ladies. In the Musée des Arts Décoratifs version, the lady wears drop pearl earrings as in Clouet's painting; her hair is drawn back in a similar manner but her headdress features a more elaborate band of pearl and gold decoration; she does not wear the bracelets found on the Clouet painting; and while, she wears a similar golden ring on her pinky, she wears an additional ring on her ring finger. In the Lehmann version produced after a sixteenth-century copy at Chenonceau, the lady wears no earrings; her hair is also drawn back but the center of her headdress is a different style, its center point reaches more deeply into her forehead and the sides recede in curving arches to frame her hair. Like the lady in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs version, she wears no bracelets but wears two rings on her pinky and ring fingers. The lady in the Chantilly version differs most in her adornment. Her hair is pulled back in a similar style but instead of the headdress, pearl hair clips or combs are responsible for maintaining its shape. She wears pearl drop earrings but she adds to them a pearl necklace and bracelets on either hand. She wears the same rings as the other two

ladies. Her whole body is draped in a beautiful transparent cloth, visible only at its edges due to its delicate trim. These differences in hairstyle, headdresses, and jewelry may reflect a desire for invention on the part of the artist, the personal tastes of the sitter or patron, or changing fashions given the extended length of time over which the paintings were produced.

Expanding the view to examine the whole canvas, the fruits and flowers of the foreground remain remarkably similar, only slightly differentiated in their coloring. In the copies, however, the flowers have migrated onto the curtains decorating the space around the lady. As I argued in the first chapter, in Clouet's painting, these flowers had real significance, not only as symbols for the lady's beauty and fertility, but also as potential additives for the bath that would enhance the water's medicinal and cosmetic effects. In the copies, however, the flowers are arbitrarily placed amidst the folds of the curtains and hover unrealistically in space. Like the frequently copied motifs of prints, they have lost their original significance and have taken on a purely ornamental function. Similarly, the gesture of the lady pulling back the sheet around the tub had significance in Clouet's painting, being the means by which the lady revealed the signature of the artist. In the copies, however, this gesture is repeated without its original significance; there is no signature to reveal. It retains the original's sensuality but no longer serves its primary purpose.

The final motif that changes in the copies is the image over the mantelpiece. The image is similar in the three versions and though its exact subject matter is difficult to decipher, its style is clearly derived from the decoration of the Galerie François I (Figures 45a, 46a, 47a). Whereas in the Clouet portrait and the Louvre portrait, the image was an oil painting distinct from the marble

mantelpiece, in the copies, the image is composed of stuccowork that seems to extend the marble of the fireplace. The vegetation, putti, and sphinx are decoration of the type found in the ornamental frames of the Galerie François I. These motifs are set around a cartouche where one might expect to find a composition. In the copies, however, the image in the cartouche changes or is empty as in the Chantilly version. This empty frame strongly recalls prints like Ducerceau's where frames are disassociated from their original compositions and sometimes represented entirely empty. In creating this piece of background decoration, the artists of the copies may have drawn on such prints. The movement of motifs between the mediums further underscores the similar way in which they operate. In these copies, the artists inventive use of the stuccowork decoration further enhances the connection between the cold, statuesque manner in which the lady is represented and the characteristic stuccowork of the Fontainebleau style.

The double bather compositions operate similarly, reproducing a standard formula but substituting and exchanging various motifs (Figures 48-50). In these copies, the facial features of the sitters are more closely related. If one were only to examine the variants of the double bather portraits, one might assume that they were meant to represent the same women. This seems to have been what the inscriber of the Fontainebleau copy believed when he inscribed the copy with the names of Gabrielle d'Estrées and her sister. Their place within the larger group of portraits, however, suggests that they may indeed represent different women, though highly idealized and little differentiated.

The highly erotic quality of the Louvre painting is somewhat diminished in the copies. The women are represented clothed in a thin white fabric of varying transparency like that found

in the Chantilly version. The configuration of the women's bodies has changed so they no longer perfectly mirror one another. The woman on the right still faces outward in the manner of Gabrielle d'Estrées, though now, her left hand toys with the long, white, pearl necklace that rests between her breasts instead of the coronation ring. In addition, the turn of her head and the direction of her gaze, relates more closely to Clouet's lady and its variants. The lady on the left no longer turns her body outward to the viewer but instead turns her body inward, withholding her breasts from the viewer's consumption. She still turns her head over her shoulder, however, to address the viewer and the seductive curve of her back hints at her unrevealed form. She no longer engages in the infamous nipple-pinch, the center of the original painting's eroticism. Instead, she grasps at the sheet of the tub in an appropriation of Clouet's lady's gesture.

The highly refined setting of the Louvre painting has also been altered to include the more domestic motifs of Clouet's painting. Most prominently, the wet nurse has been transported and she and the infant she nurses occupy the central space between the two ladies. Along with Clouet's wet nurse, several other background motifs reappear. The young maid with her golden kettle in hand and her body turned to deliver its contents to the bath is reproduced exactly. She stands behind a draped table, which appears in both the Clouet and Louvre versions, but is now red in keeping with the copies' more heated palette. Behind her is a variation of the fireplace, white with red inlay and decorated with strong borders and a central cartouche featuring a nude figure. The manner in which these motifs are reproduced and reassembled in an almost puzzle-like fashion again bears a resemblance to the circulation of motifs in prints. The effect of this recombination of motifs is a painting less strikingly erotic than the Louvre painting from which it

derives. While one still has the sense of being granted access to a private, intimate female space, that space is more domestic and familiar than refined and erotic. The ladies actions and presentation of themselves to the viewer are less bold. The copiers have chosen to emphasize more strongly the maternal role of the women.

Some of the variants break more strongly with this formula. The Florence version, for example, has a vertical format (Figure 51). The back curtain of the bath remains closed to form the backdrop of the painting in place of any domestic scene. Thus, the subject of the painting narrows to focus entirely on the nude ladies and their interaction. The configuration of the ladies relates to those found in the copies discussed above. On the right, the woman turns her body outward to face the viewer. Again, her pose more strongly resembles that of the lady in Clouet's painting than Gabrielle in the Louvre's, especially in the turn of her head and direction of her gaze. The connection is even stronger in this painting because it is she, rather than her companion, who pulls back the sheet that surrounds the tub. On the left, the lady's body turns inward away from the viewer but again, her face turns over her shoulder to address us. Here, the curve of her breast is outlined and suggests even more strongly her withheld form. While the representation of her body is generally consistent with that of the copies, the lady is elevated and sits on the edge of the tub, exposing her buttocks to the viewer. The artist appears to have been familiar with the original painting as well as the copies, however, because the lady on the right uses the characteristic gesture with which Gabrielle's companion pinches her nipple. Instead of pinching the nipple of her companion, she pinches her finger in what might be considered another form of erotic touching or foreplay. Again, the gestures and motifs in the painting have

been reproduced almost exactly but moved or arranged, granting them new meaning in the process.

The group of toilette scenes also functions according to a repetition of a standard formula and circulation of motifs (Figures 52-4). The lady's facial features are most strongly differentiated in this group of paintings, confirming that the paintings represent different women who adopted the same formula in representing themselves in a manner akin to Clouet's standard court portraits. In the past, scholars have argued that the toilette formula might derive from a lost pendant to Clouet's *Lady in Her Bath*, which would support the notion that Clouet's originals inspired a host of copies.[96] Indeed, the lady's position at her dressing table in the foreground provides a mirror to the position of Clouet's lady in the bath. Her exact pose combines elements of the copies and variants. Her toying of her necklace with one hand relates to copies of the double bather portrait, while her pinching of a ring with the other recalls Gabrielle's gesture in the Louvre painting. Scholars that believe that the toilette scenes originate in a lost painting by Clouet argue that the artist of the Louvre painting appropriated this gesture from its more general purpose in the toilette scene to its more specific purpose in Gabrielle's portrait as a sign of her relationship to Henri IV and the French crown.[97]

In general, the ladies in these copies are more elaborately adorned than the ladies appearing in the bath paintings, which makes sense given their position at the toilette surrounded by cosmetics and jewelry. In all three versions, the ladies hairstyles are more elaborate, composed of braids with interwoven jewels, such as pearls and rubies, that vary from painting to

[96] Charles Sterling, *A Catalog of French Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955), 53-4.
[97] Ibid., 53-4.

painting. All of the ladies wear a transparent cloth of the type that appears in the Chantilly version of the single bather composition and in several of the double bather compositions. The highly transparent cloth, visible just at its edges and folds, highlights rather than hides the ladies' nudity. In each, the transparent cloth is attached to a high ornamental collar, composed primarily of gold in the Dijon version and pearls in the other two. Each lady also wears a long necklace which dangles between her breasts and which she toys with her left hand; bracelets on either arm, and a ring which she hold in her right hand between her thumb and forefinger. The appearance of these jewelry pieces vary, composed of gold, pearls, or other jewels, and are sometimes added to, as in the case of the Dijon painting, where the lady wears two additional rings on the fingers of her right hand. In general, however, the adornments follow a basic formula that is flexible enough to accommodate such substitutions and additions.

The background of the toilette painting features a domestic scene in keeping with the original two paintings and their variants. The actual motifs, however, are unique. The motif of a lady bending to retrieve clothing from a wooden chest undoubtedly derives from Titian's *Venus of Urbino* (Figure 62 and 62a). In the Dijon and Worcester versions, the lady is turned to her side but in the Basel version, she faces backward in the exact manner of the servant in Titian's painting (Figures 52a, 53a, 54a). The appropriation of this motif provides evidence of the relationship between that painting and this group. The domesticated version of a goddess, represented in Titian's painting and in the various school of Fontainebleau paintings representing Venus at her toilette, represents an important step in the complete fusion of the portrait and ideal that these paintings represent. A sixteenth-century French copy of the Giorgione's *Sleeping*

Venus, removed from nature and placed in a domestic setting, presents even stronger evidence for their relationship (Figure 63). The painting incorporates the window panels, mirror, marble fireplace, and green draped table of the Clouet painting, and the woman servant dressed in red and bending over her sewing of the Louvre.

The use of flowers in these paintings is interesting. As in the bath paintings, through the process of copying, the flowers seem to have lost any significance that they might originally have had and now serve a purely ornamental function. In the copy of the *Venus of Urbino*, the flowers cover the entire bed and the floor surrounding the bed. The flat style in which they have been painted makes it unclear whether they are meant to represent actual flowers scattered throughout the room or a printed, decorative pattern. Similarly in the Dijon and Worcester versions of the toilette scenes, flowers are scattered across the table in the foreground. In the Dijon version, it is unclear whether the flowers are meant to represent real flowers scattered in the midst of the various jewels and objects or a design on the red cloth. In the Worcester version, the flowers have migrated beyond the foreground to decorate the far wall, now clearly a painted or printed design. The transformation of the floral motif into a purely ornamental pattern recalls the bath paintings and the circulation of motifs in contemporary prints to which it corresponds.

The differentiation of decorative elements like the jewelry box, the mirror, and the vase is especially interesting when examined in relation to contemporary prints. The publication of images of antique objects, as in Lazare de Baïf's book which cataloged ancient things from vases to clothing to ships, were extremely popular in the period.[98] The images inspired French artists to lend the new fashions of antiquity to their art. Artisans produced objects inspired by these images

[98] Lazare de Baïf, *Lazari Bayfi Annotations in L. Il de Captivis....* (Paris: Robert Estienne, 1536).

but even more frequently, in conjunction with the rise of print technology, artists printed designs for luxury goods. These included designs for jewelry, tableware, furniture, frames for pictures or mirrors, medallions, and decorative motifs that could be applied to many different kinds of objects. As Zorach argues, these prints did not serve a straightforward function as designs for production but served alternately "as vicarious fantasy, as advertisement for the king's new aesthetic sensibilities, and as fodder for imitation."[99] One example is a drawing for a vase designed by the Flemish artist Léonard Thiry from which his French collaborator René Boyvin produced a pair of inspired designs in engraving (Figure 65-66). The images feature abundant imagery in the manner of the decoration of Fontainebleau and the prints it inspired, combining grotesque masques, monsters, animals, and mythological narratives in such a fantastic way as to suggest that the prints were never intended as designs for actual objects. Rather, they were images to be enjoyed in their own right. Further, as Zorach suggested, they seem to have been designed to be imitated. Indeed, such designs were copied not only in print but also in other mediums. Vases, like Thiry's and Boyvin's, frequently appear in paintings of birth and bathing scenes like the ones we have examined (Figures 29-31). In fact, a nearly exact copy of Boyvin's design appears in the form of a vase in *Venus at Her Toilette* (Figure 29). Similar vases appear in the background of the toilette compositions, as do elaborate jewelry, jewelry boxes, and mirror frames like those found in design prints. As in those prints, the objects are playfully reworked in the different compositions. In the case of the mirror, for example, the two figures which hold up the mirror in the Dijon and Worcester paintings become intertwined in the Basel version (Figures

[99] Zorach, *Blood, Milk, Ink, Gold: Abundance and Excess in the French Renaissance,* 8-11.

52b, 53b, 54b). The way these motifs are copied and altered in the paintings closely relates to the same process in print.

Copying as Promiscuous

The portraits operate in a similar fashion to prints, working from a standard formula that is altered as it is reproduced. Specifically artists seem to treat motifs in the same manner, drawing them from a repertoire created by the original paintings but disassociating them from their original context so they can move around more freely, sometimes becoming ornamental or decorative. The paintings are obviously distinct from prints; they would have been associated with a higher class and would have formed more permanent objects of display. Nonetheless, the analogous manner in which they are reproduced and their motifs are circulated is striking. We might turn to contemporary understanding of prints and their reproduction to understand the relationship of the original paintings and their copies and variants.

In her chapter on print culture, Zorach explores the way in which the production and reproduction of works of art, particularly prints, was tied to the reproduction of human bodies. [100] The production of works of art was explicitly imagined as an erotic act, one that mimed sexual reproduction. This was particularly true of printmaking because Aristotelian theories of reproduction related readily to the idea of printing. Biological reproduction was often imagined as imprinting as in Shakespeare's eleventh sonnet "[Nature] carv'd thee for her seal, and meant thereby / Thou shouldst print more, not let that copy die."[101] As print technology grew and prints became increasingly abundant, their mechanical processes of reproduction became associated

[100] Ibid., 177-184.
[101] Quoted in Ibid., 181.

with an unnatural proliferation. As we have seen, as subjects were continually reproduced in print, they became increasingly removed from their original context and their motifs and ornament often multiplied, becoming in a sense "perverse." Indeed, the seemingly endless reproductivity of matter that mechanistic forms of reproduction allowed blurred the line between Nature and Art, between natural and unnatural reproduction. Printing became associated with sexual promiscuity and licentiousness for some Renaissance thinkers. In Italy, for example, Filippo de Strata argued that the "virgin" text once printed is a "harlot" and tied the abundance of print media to the eroticism of its imagery.[102]

To return to our unusual group of portraits, we might understand the manner in which they are copied as relating to their strange subject matter, in the same way that the mechanistic reproduction of prints and the free, even licentious way that copies reproduced originals was associated with their erotic subject matter. The act of copying might be seen as itself promiscuous and the proliferation of copies of the paintings might be related to the artificial, sometimes unnatural, image of eroticism and fertility that they represent.

The Erotic and Maternal: Exchangeable Motifs

In the past, scholars have found the recombination of elements from the two original paintings to be highly strange and unusual. The inclusion of a wet nurse suckling a swaddled infant seemed strange enough in the domestic interior of Clouet's painting when paired with the representation of a nude lady in the bath in the foreground. The introduction of this wet nurse into the dark background of a painting of two ladies in the act of bathing together seems truly

[102] Filippo de Strata, *Polemic Against Printing*, ed. Martin Lowry, trans. Shelagh Grier (Birmingham: Hayloft, 1986), quoted in Zorach, *Blood, Milk, Ink, Gold* ,181.

bizarre. This difficulty in reconciling the seemingly contradictory motifs results from the difficulty in reconciling the simultaneously erotic and maternal role of the ladies. This thesis, however, has revealed the erotic and the maternal to be intimately connected. The exchangeability of motifs in these paintings, the seeming ease with which maternal figures amd motifs are inserted into erotic paintings and which strikes our modern sensibilities as bizarre, ultimately confirms the connection of the maternal and the erotic in the period.

CONCLUSION

Confronted by this enigmatic group of paintings, scholars have attempted to unlock their meaning by teasing out the ideal and the real, by unmasking the portrait to reveal the true woman represented underneath. The paintings, however, frustrate them at every turn, refusing to offer a clear identity that might be unmasked or uncovered. This thesis embraces the complicated identity offered by these paintings in which the ideal and individual are impossibly intertwined. It understands the combination of the ideal nude and portrait in these paintings to be symptomatic of the creative and performative nature of the women's identity and sexuality at the French court. It explores the way in which the women are represented in these portraits as participating in their construction as ideals, ideals of beauty and eroticism as well as fertility and maternity.

In my first chapter, I analyze François Clouet's *Lady in Her Bath*, generally believed to be the first painting of the group, and therefore, progenitor of the genre. Understanding the specific role of bathing in the period and the prescriptions that governed its use, I am able to locate the precise time in the woman's life represented as the moment directly after childbirth. I explore the way in which the bath functions to bridge the maternal and erotic roles of the woman in this moment. By comparing the portrait to one of its closest precedents, Leonardo's *Mona Vanna*, I bring to light the way in which the painting consciously emphasizes the role that the woman plays in transforming herself into an erotic and maternal ideal, specifically through the artifice of bathing. The connection between art and bathing, which appears throughout the

period, especially in the Appartements des Bains at the Château de Fontainebleau, underscores the equation of the artifice of bathing and painting in Clouet's portrait, and therefore, the shared enterprise of lady and artist. At the Appartements des Bains, the illusionistic decoration of the baths combined with the stylized rituals of its inhabitants to produce a mythology of the court. In Clouet's painting, the artist and the lady collaborate to create a mythology of the self.

In my second chapter, I analyze the enigmatic portrait presumed to depict Gabrielle d'Estrées and her sister in the bath. I question the traditional scholarly interpretation that understands the painting, especially its famous nipple-pinch, as solely an allusion to Gabrielle's pregnancy, denying the potentially erotic, even homoerotic effect of the painting as in conflict with such a reading. I demonstrate that the homoerotic effect of the painting actually enhances the image of Gabrielle as an ideal of beauty and eroticism as well as fertility and maternity. Using contemporary theories of mimetic or imitative desire, which understand the object of desire as impressing their image on the desirer, I argue that Gabrielle impresses her image on her companion and the viewer. I equate this image-making power to the role of the artist. This productive or reproductive power ultimately enhances Gabrielle as an ideal of eroticism and fertility.

In my third chapter, I address the many copies and variants of these two paintings, which other scholars have neglected and which significantly alter our understanding of the works. I argue that the lady in the bath theme actually constituted a formula that operates similarly to the more standard court portrait formula established by Clouet. I argue that the act of copying was itself performative, comparing it to other rituals of the court. I use the model of prints to explore

the manner in which the paintings are reproduced and specifically, the way in which various elements are reworked and recombined. I argue that the way in which these motifs freely circulate is the ultimate demonstration of the fusion of the erotic and maternal ideals that these paintings represent.

This thesis is unique in approaching the paintings as a group. The scholarly focus on individual biography has led them to study the paintings individually. Studying the paintings as a group, however, changes our understanding of their meaning and allows us to relate them to larger questions about women's identity and sexuality in the period. This thesis also differs from previous scholarship in its emphasis on the active role that the women have in fashioning themselves into ideals. It understands the portrait as a means through which women perform their identity and studies them as products of the shared artifice of sitter and artist. Finally, it is unique in understanding the ideal that the portraits represent to be simultaneously erotic and maternal, qualities that previous scholars have seen as being in conflict and which have frustrated their attempts to understand the works.

While the thesis offers a new way of understanding the portraits as a group or genre, it does not exhaust the possibilities for scholarship offered by such an approach. Scholarship that continues to examine the group as a whole, their meaning, their function, and what they reveal to us about women of the period, is still necessary. Especially necessary is scholarship that investigates the complicated relationship between the copies and variants, which previous scholars have neglected, and which though I begin to investigate in chapter three still demands

further technical analysis. The paintings are a rich source of information on women of the period and deserve to be further probed.

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Figure 1b: Detail of signature.

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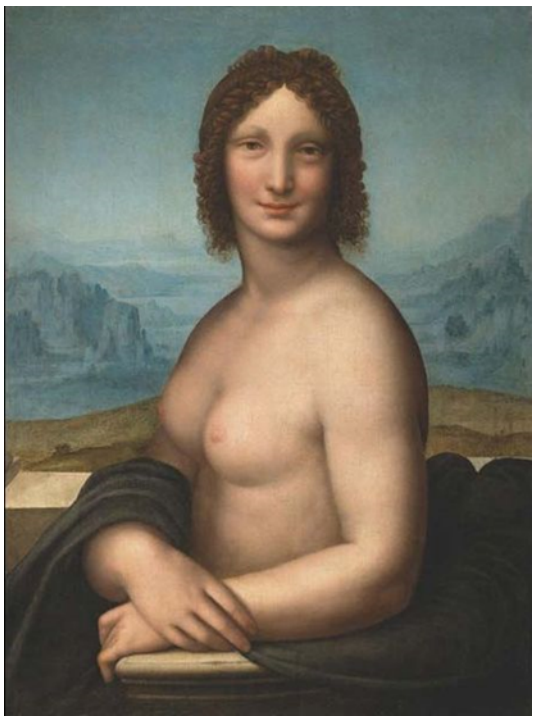

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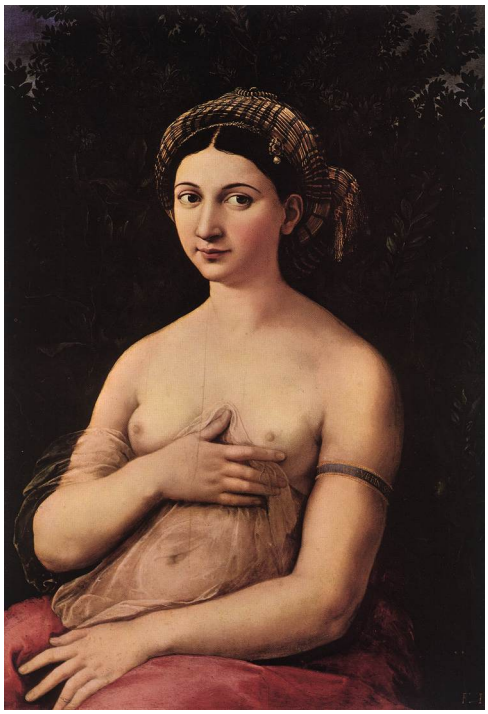

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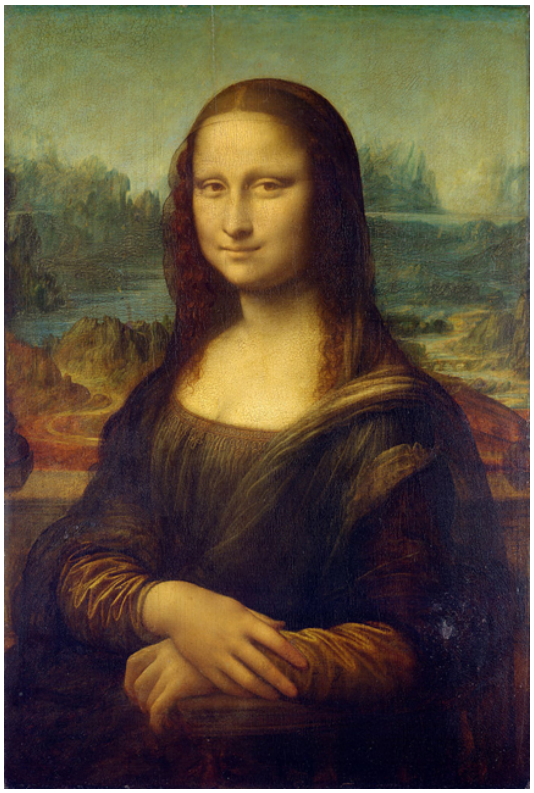

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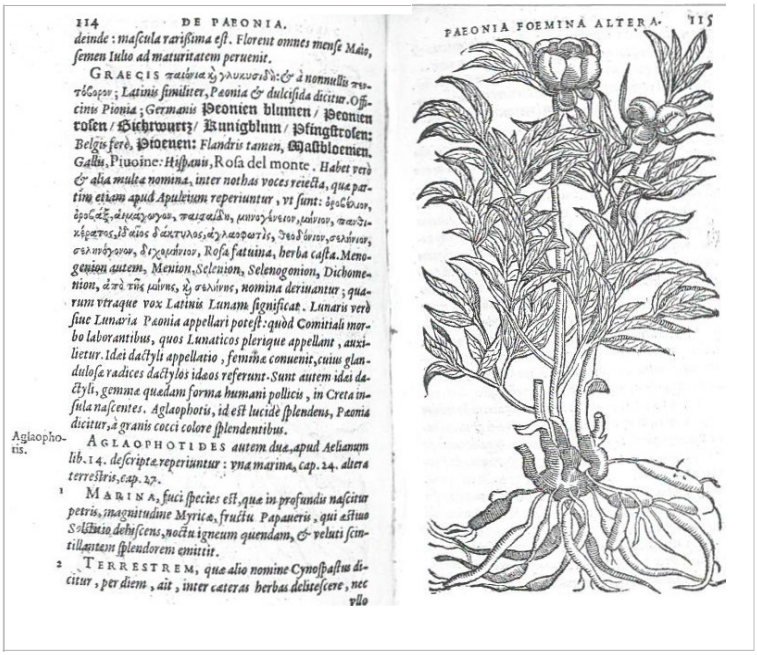

Figure 14: Illustration from Rembert Dodoens, *Florum eto coronarium odoraratumque nonullarium herbarum historia*, (Anvers: Chirstophe Plantin, 1568). Bibliothèque interuniversitaire de pharmacie, Paris.

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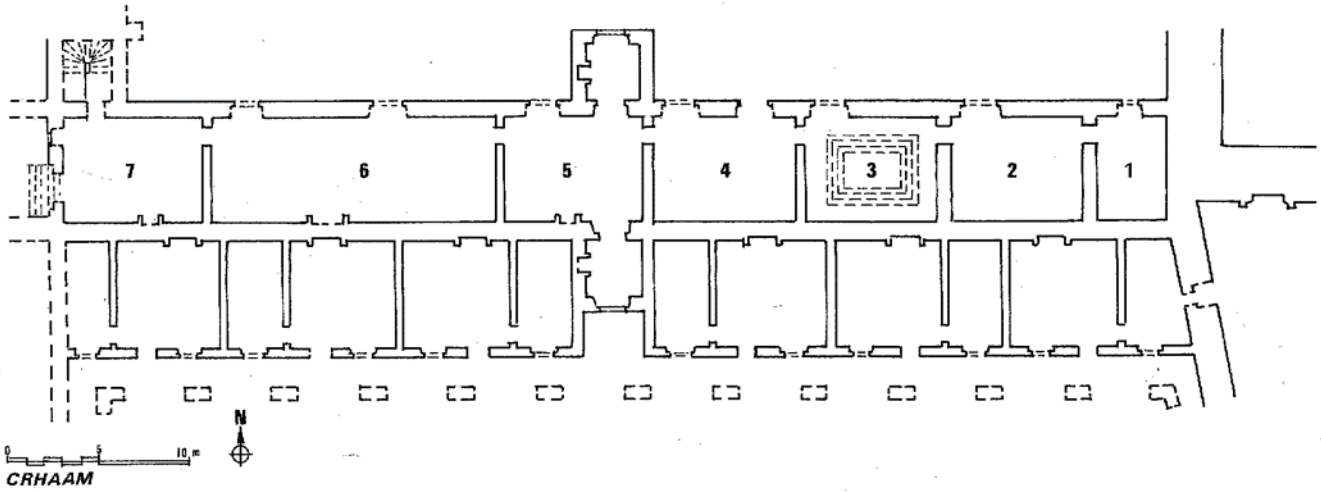

Figure 17: Layout of the Appartements des Bains, c. 1540. (reconstruction by J. Blécon)
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Figure 18: Rosso Fiorentino and Francesco Primaticcio, (decorated by), Galerie François I, 1530s. Château de Fontainebleau.

Figure 19: Francesco Primaticcio (after), *Three Water Nymphs with Putti around a Salamander*, original before 1543. Counterproof. Musée National du Château de Fontainebleau.
Inscription: "Plafond peint dans la petite chamber des bains a Fontainebleau par St Martin de Boulogne."

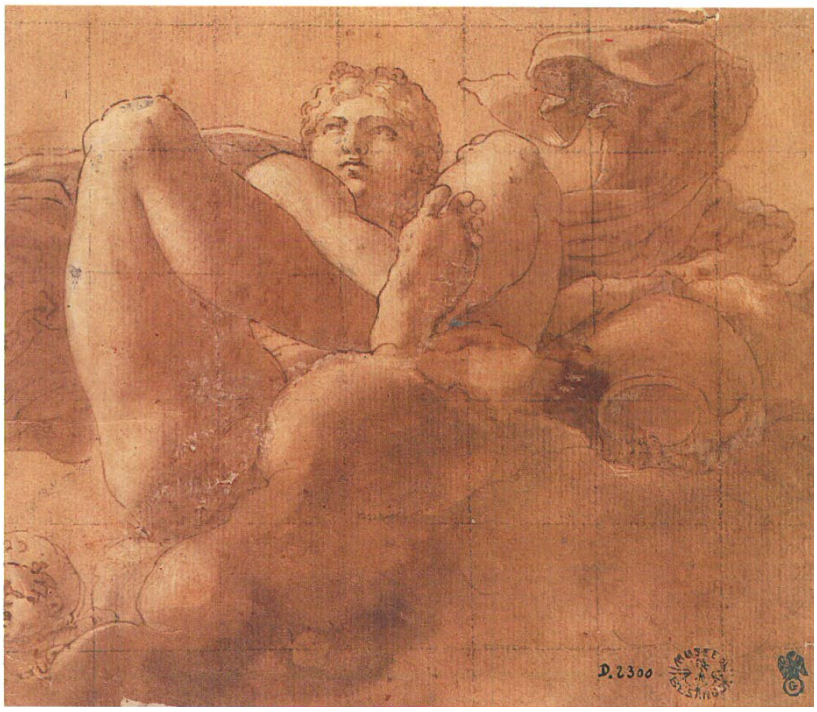

Figure 20: Francesco Primaticcio (after), Drawing of a *Nymph* on a vault, original before 1543. Pen and brown ink, with brown wash, heightened with white, on light brown prepared paper. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Besançon.

Figure 21: Pierre Milan (after Francesco Primaticcio), *Jupiter Seducing Callisto*, original before 1543. Engraving, 18 x 28.4 cm. Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Estampes, Paris.

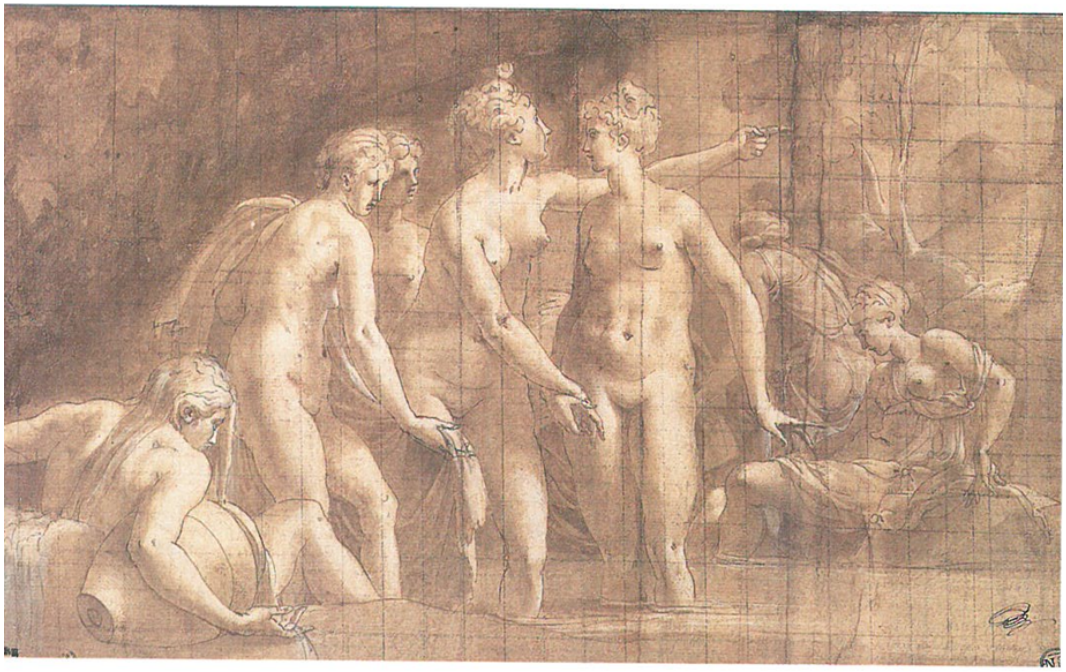

Figure 22: Francesco Primaticcio, *Diana Discovering Callisto's Pregnancy*, before 1543. Pen and brown ink, with brown wash, heightened with white, on light brown
prepared paper. Musée du Louvre, Département des Artes Graphiques, Paris.

Figure 23: Francesco Primaticcio (after), *Juno Turning Callisto into a Bear*, original before 1543. Pen and brown ink, with brown wash, heightened with white, on light brown prepared paper. Musée du Louvre, Département des Artes Graphiques, Paris.

Figure 24: Francesco Primaticcio, *Jupiter Putting Callisto into the Heavens as a Bear*, before 1543. Pen and brown ink, with brown wash, heightened with white, on light brown prepared paper. Musée du Louvre, Département des Artes Graphiques, Paris.

Figure 25: Antonio Fantuzzi (after Primaticcio), *Mars and Venus Bathing*, c. 1544. Etching. Bibliothéque Nationale, Paris.

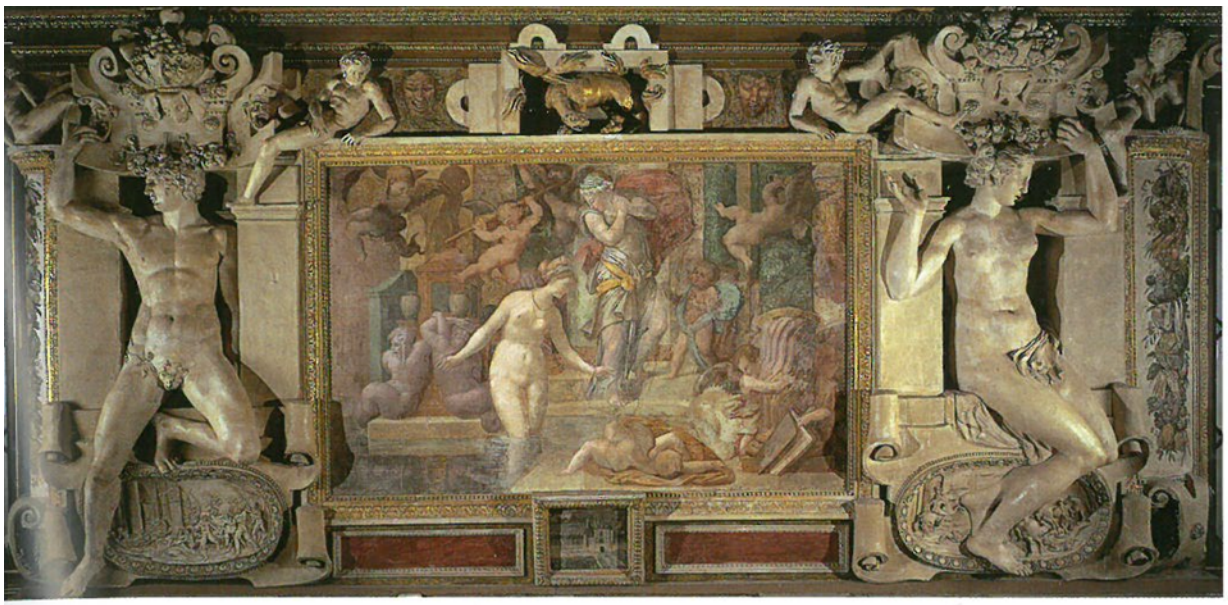

Figure 26: Rosso Fiorentino, *Venus Frustrated*, 1530s. Fresco and stucco. Galerie François I, Fontainebleau

Figure 27: Jean Mignon (after Luca Penni), *Women in the Bath*, 1535-55. Etching. Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Estampes, Paris.

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Figure 28: Giulio Romano, *Mars and Venus Bathing*, c. 1526-28. Fresco. Palace de Te, Chamber of Amor and Pysche, Mantova.

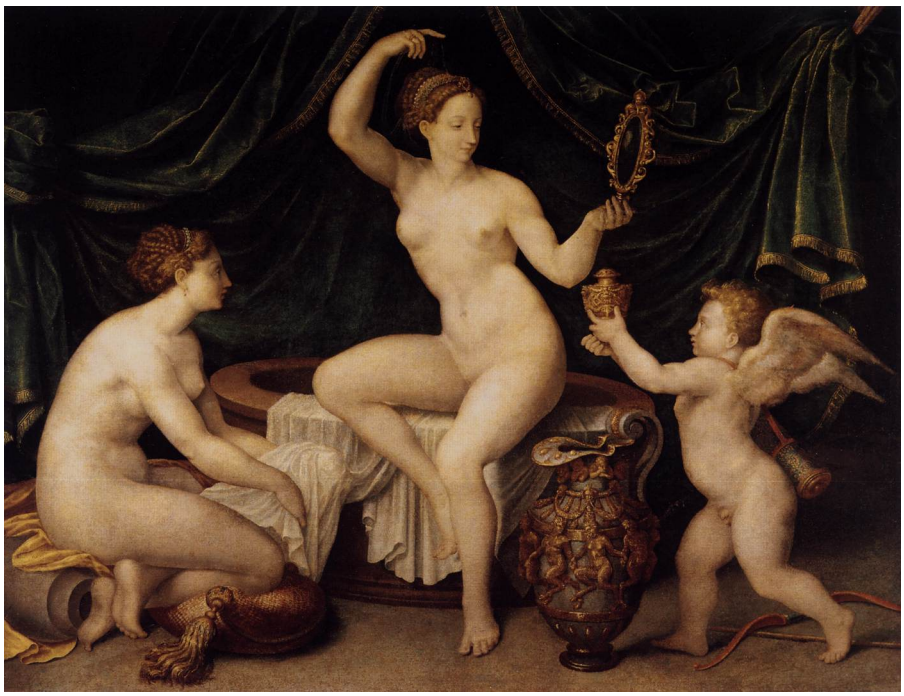

Figure 29: School of Fontainebleau, *Toilette of Venus*, 1545-50. Oil on canvas, 97 x 126 cm. Louvre, Paris.

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Figure 32: Rosso Fiorentino, *Bacchus, Venus, Cupid, and a Satyr*, 1530s. Oil on canvas. Musée National d'Histoire et d'Art du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, Luxembourg.

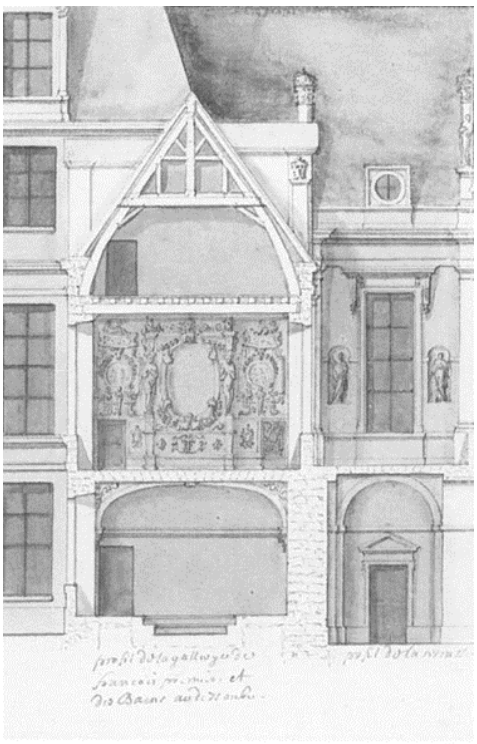

Figure 33: François d'Orbay, *Elevation of the Hallery of the Wing of the Château de Fontainebleau*, 1782. Drawing. Musée de Archives Nationales, Paris. Detail: east wall.

Figure 34: François d'Orbay, elevation of the east wall of the Galerie François I with Rosso's *Bacchus and Venus* superimposed (reconstruction after Béguin), Galerie François, Fontainebleau.

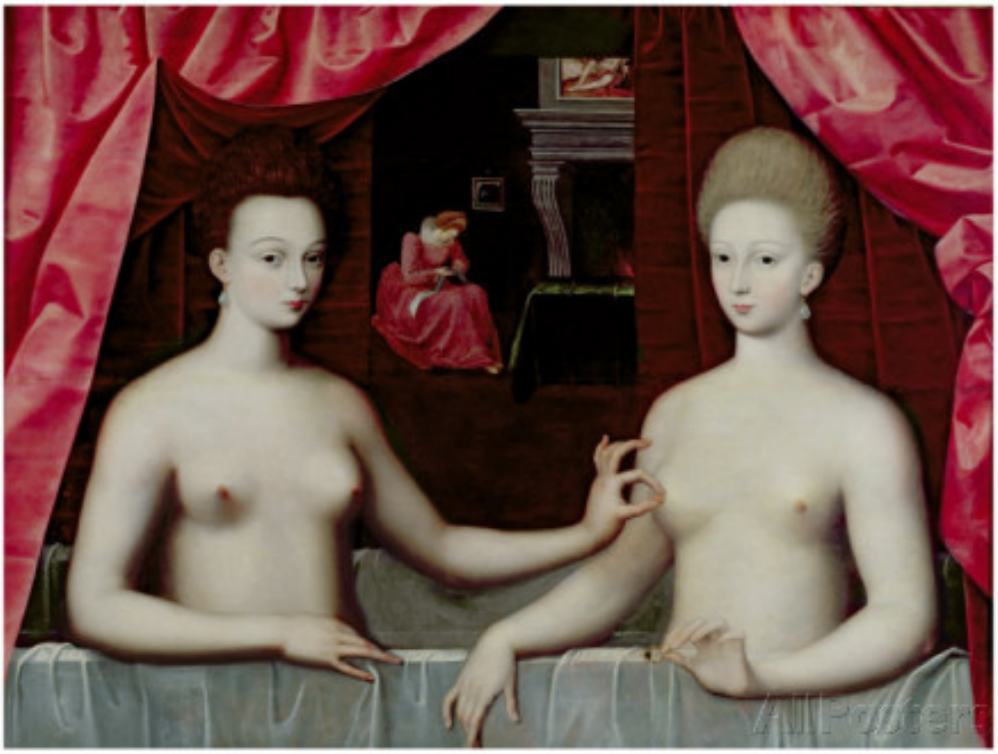

Figure 35: School of Fontainebleau, *Gabrielle D'Estrées and Her Sister in the Bath*, 1594. Oil on wood, 96 x 100 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Figure 35a: Detail of nipple and ring pinch.

Figure 35b. Detail of domestic scene in background.

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Figure 35d: Detail of mirror

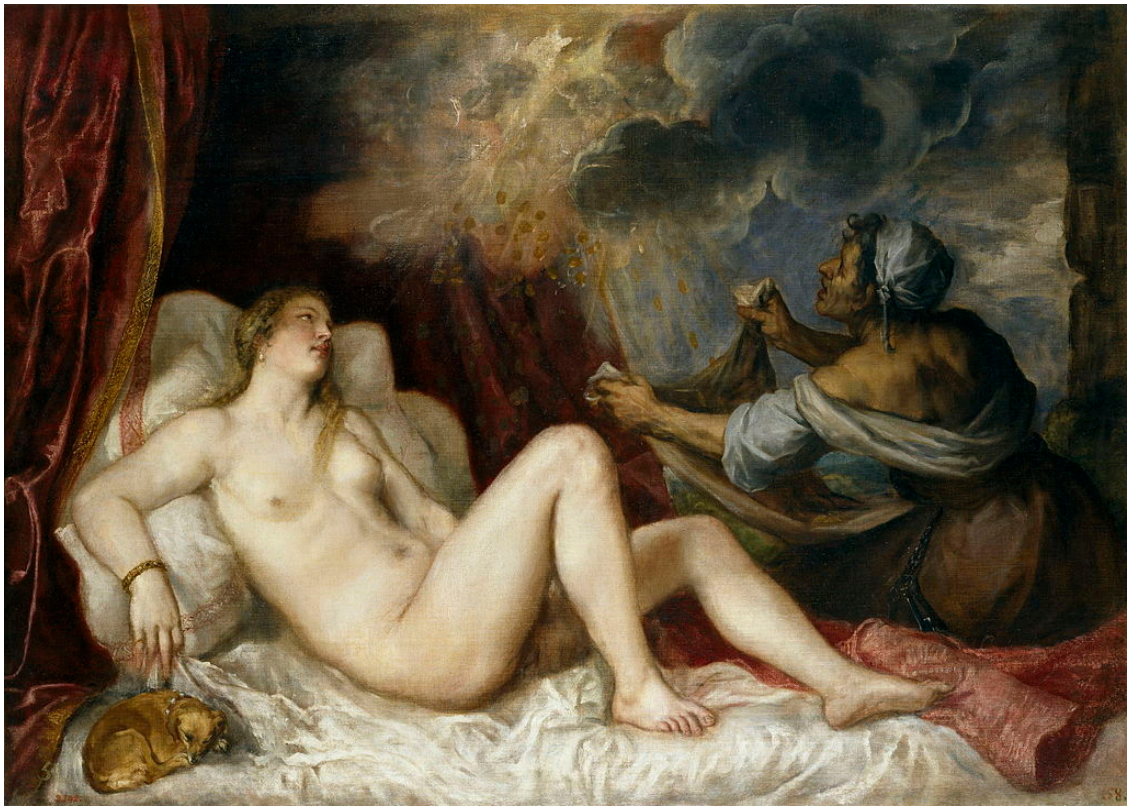
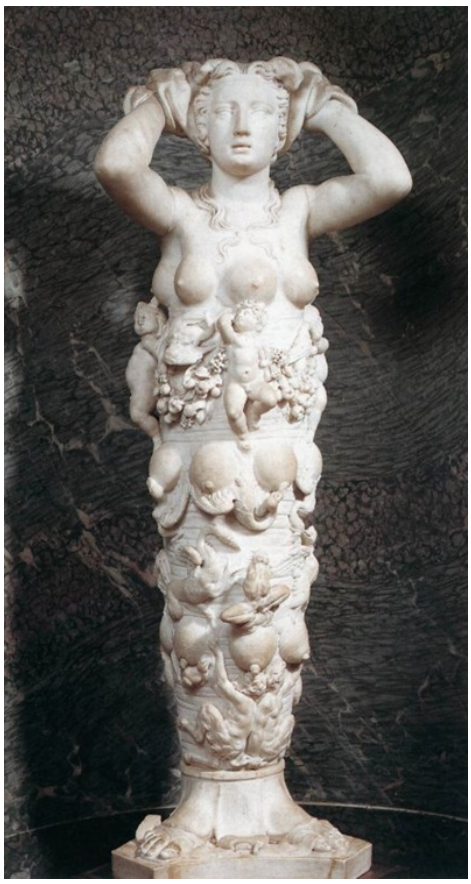


Figure 36: Titian, *Danaë Receiving the Golden Rain*, 1560-65. Oil on canvas, 129.8 x 181.2 cm. Museo del Prado, Madrid.



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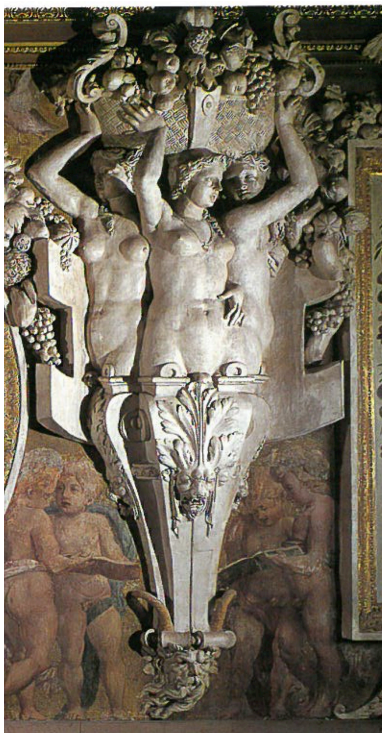

Figure 39: Rosso Fiorentino and assistants, detail of *Danaë*, c. 1533-9. Fresco and stucco. Galerie François I, Fontainebleau.

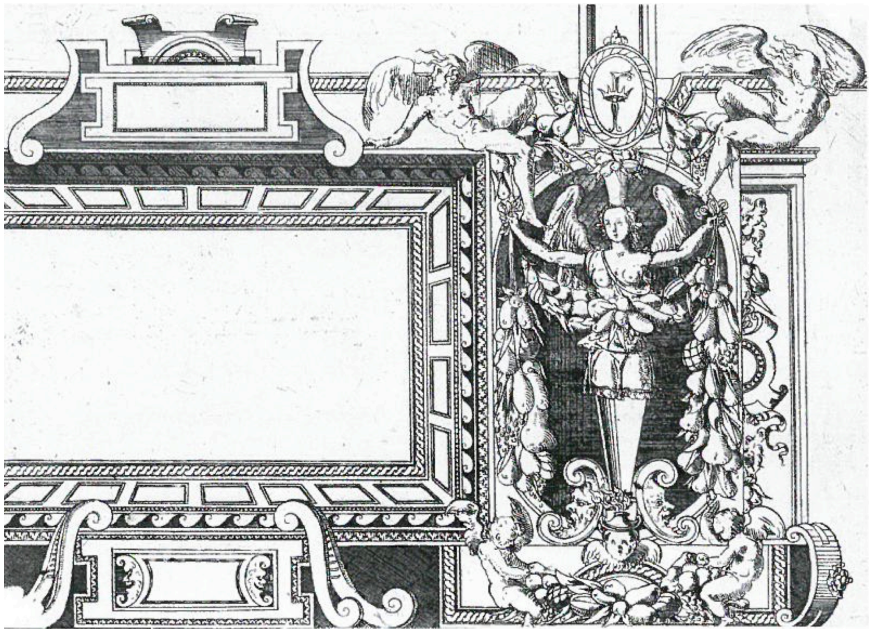

Figure 40: Jacques Androuet Ducerceau, ornamental frame with female from bearing fruits, inspired by the Galerie François I, c. 1550-75. Engraving. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

Figure 41: Benvenuto Cellini, *Salt Cellar (Saliera)*, 1543. Partly enameled gold, 26 × 33.5 cm. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

Figure 41a: Detail of breast press.

Figure 42: Rosso Fiorentino and assistants, detail of stucco figures pressing breasts from *Loss of Eternal Youth*, 1533-9. Fresco and stucco. Galerie François Ier, Château du Fontainebleau.

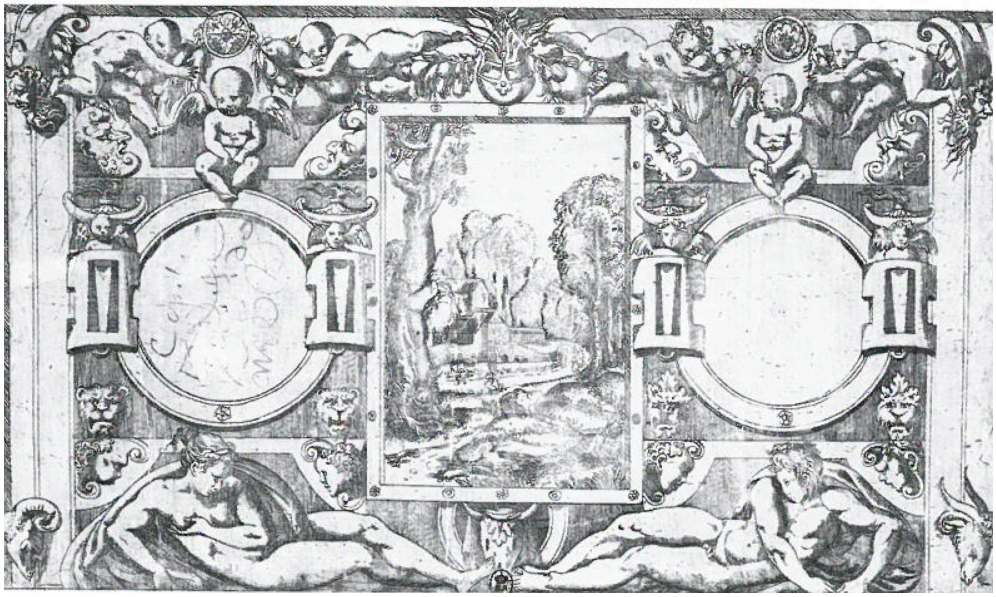

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Figure 43: Antonio Fantuzzi, ornamental frame with landscape (with figures pressing breasts), c. 1543-5. Etching. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

Figure 44: Hendrick Goltzius, *Allegory of Abundance* (design for a fountain), 1598. Ink and wash drawing. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

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Figure 45a: Detail of mantelpiece.

Figure 46: Henri Lehmann, Copy of *Lady in her Bath* (from Chenonceaux), nineteenth century. Azay-le-Rideau chateau, Musée de la Renaissance.

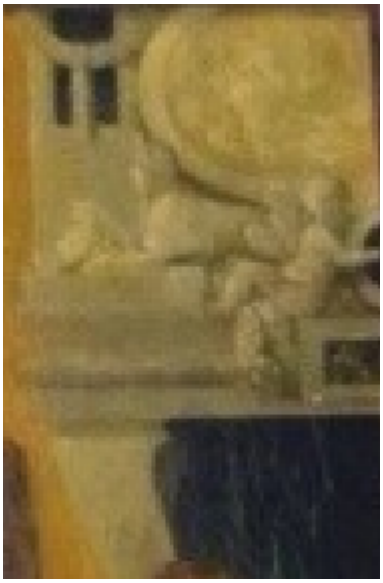

Figure 46a: Detail of mantelpiece.

Figure 47: Anonymous, *Gabrielle d'Estrées au Bain*, c. 1590-9. Bois transpose sur toile, 115 x 103 cm. Musée Condé, Chantilly.

Figure 47a: Detail of mantelpiece.

Figure 48. Anonymous, *Gabrielle d'Estrées and Her Sister in the Bath*. Château de Fontainebleau.

Figure 49: Anonymous, *Gabrielle d'Estrées and Her Sister in the Bath*. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon.

Figure 50: Anonymous, *Gabrielle d'Estrées and Her Sister in the Bath*, late sixteenth century. Oil on canvas, 63.5 x 84 cm. Musée Languedocien, Montpellier.

Figure 51: Anonymous, *Two Ladies in the Bath*, late sixteenth century. Oil on panel. Uffizi, Florence.

Figure 52: Anonymous, *Lady at Her Toilette*, late sixteenth century. Oil on panel, 105 x 76 cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon.

Figure 52a: Detail of servant.

Figure 52b: Detail of mirror.

Figure 53: Anonymous, *Lady at Her Toilette*, c. 1550-70. Oil on panel, 107 x 86 cm. Worcester Art Museum.

Figure 53a: Detail of servant.

Figure 53b: Detail of mirror.

Figure 54: Anonymous, *Lady at Her Toilette*, late sixteenth century. Oil on panel, 111.5 x 98.5 cm. Offentliche Kunstsammlung, Basel.

Figure 54a: Detail of servant.

Figure 54b: Detail of mirror.

Figure 55: Thomas Leu, *Jeanne d'Albret, Queen of Navarre*, 1597. Engraving on laid paper, 24.8 × 18.1 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

Figure 56: Leonard Gaultier, *Marie de Medici of France*, 1601. Line engraving, 16.4 × 11.3 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London.

Figure 57: Robert Nanteuil, *Christina, Queen of Sweden*, 1654. Line engraving, 26.1 × 19.9 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London.

Figure 58: Rosso Fiorentino, *Danaë*, 1530s. Fresco and stucco. Galeire François I, Château du Fontainebleau.

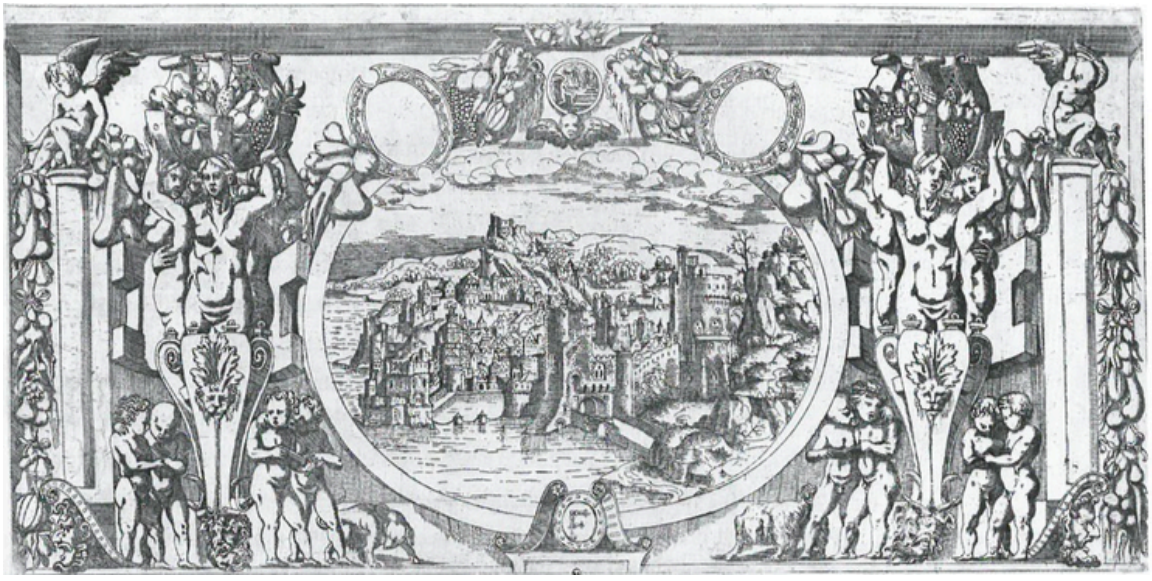

Figure 59: Antonio Fantuzzi, frame from *Danaë* (Galerie François I) with landscape, c. 1543-5. Etching. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

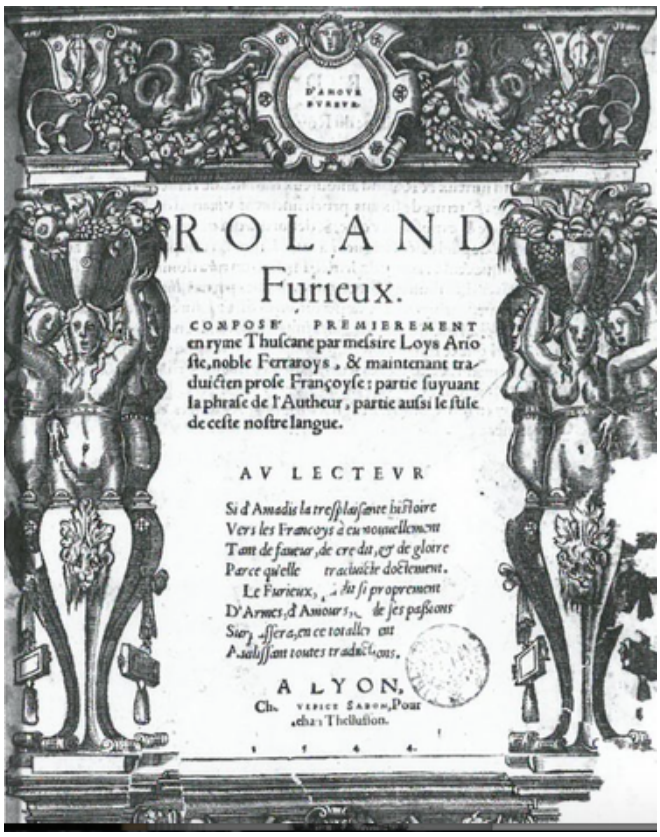

Figure 60: Jacques Androuet Duncerceau, Frontispiece from *Roland Furieux* (Lyon: Sulpice Sabon, 1544. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

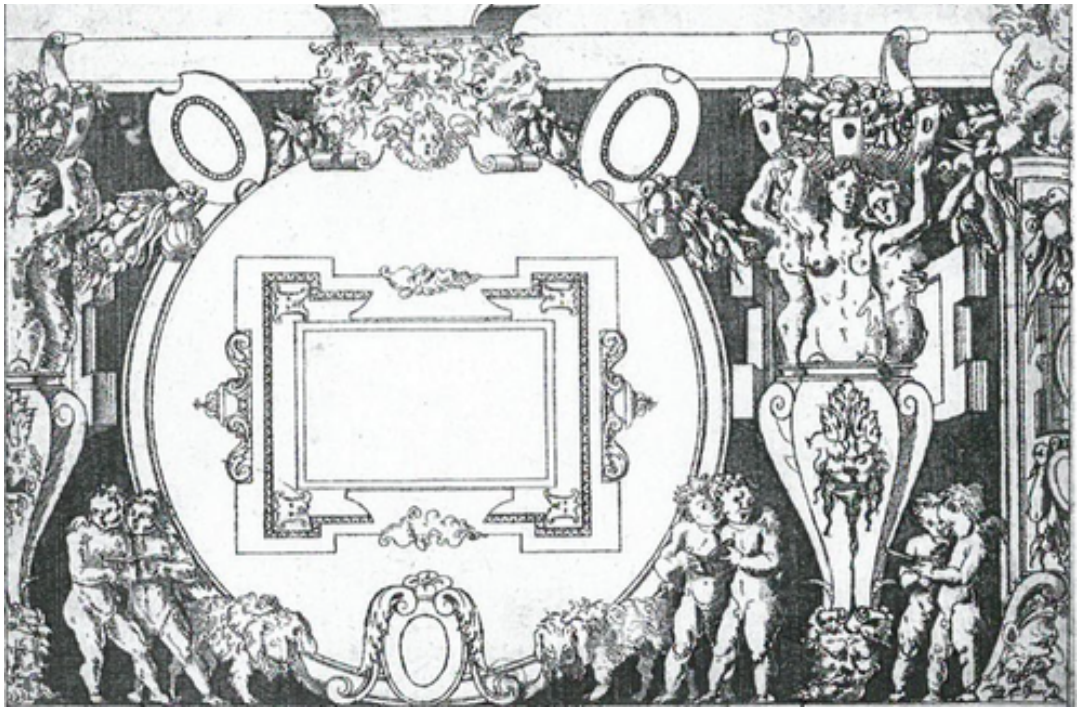
Figure 61: Jacque Androuet Ducerceau, After *Danaë*''s frame, 1575-1600. Engraving, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

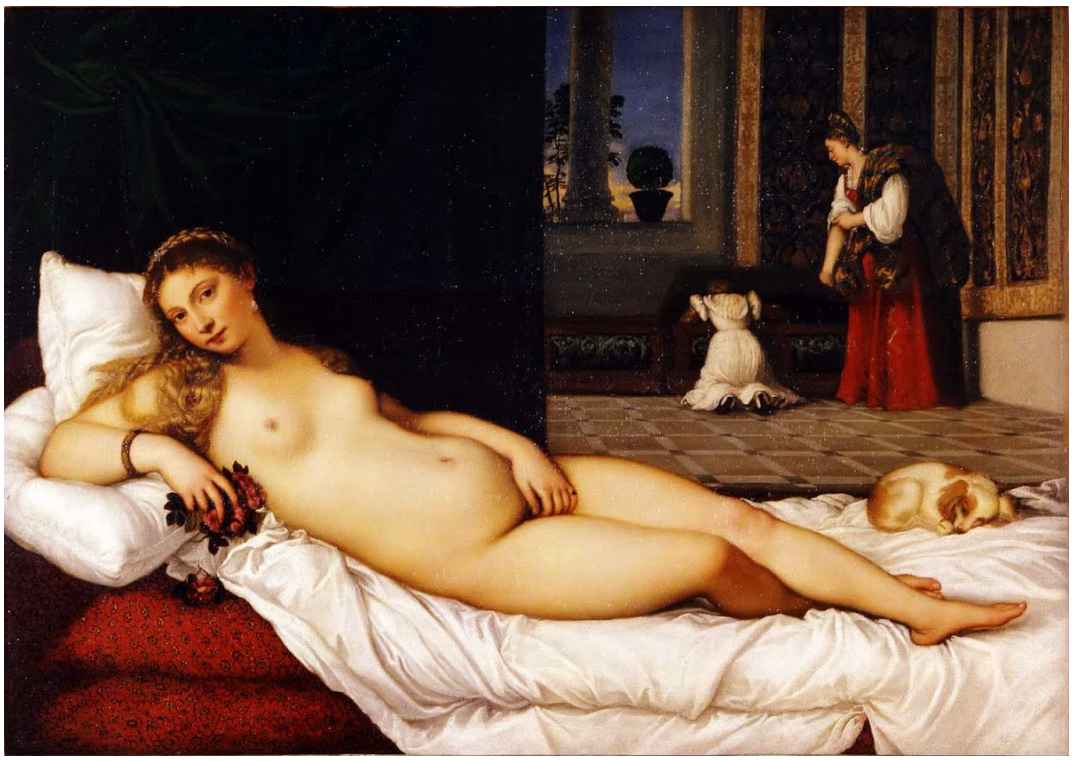

Figure 62: Titian, *Venus of Urbino*, 1538. Oil on canvas, 119.20 x 165.50 cm. Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

Figure 62a: Detail of servant.

Figure 63: Anonymous, *Venus endormie*, 16th century. Oil on panel, 50 x 65 cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts de Strasbourg, France.

Figure 64: Léonard Thiry, design for vase, 1540s or 50s. Drawing. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

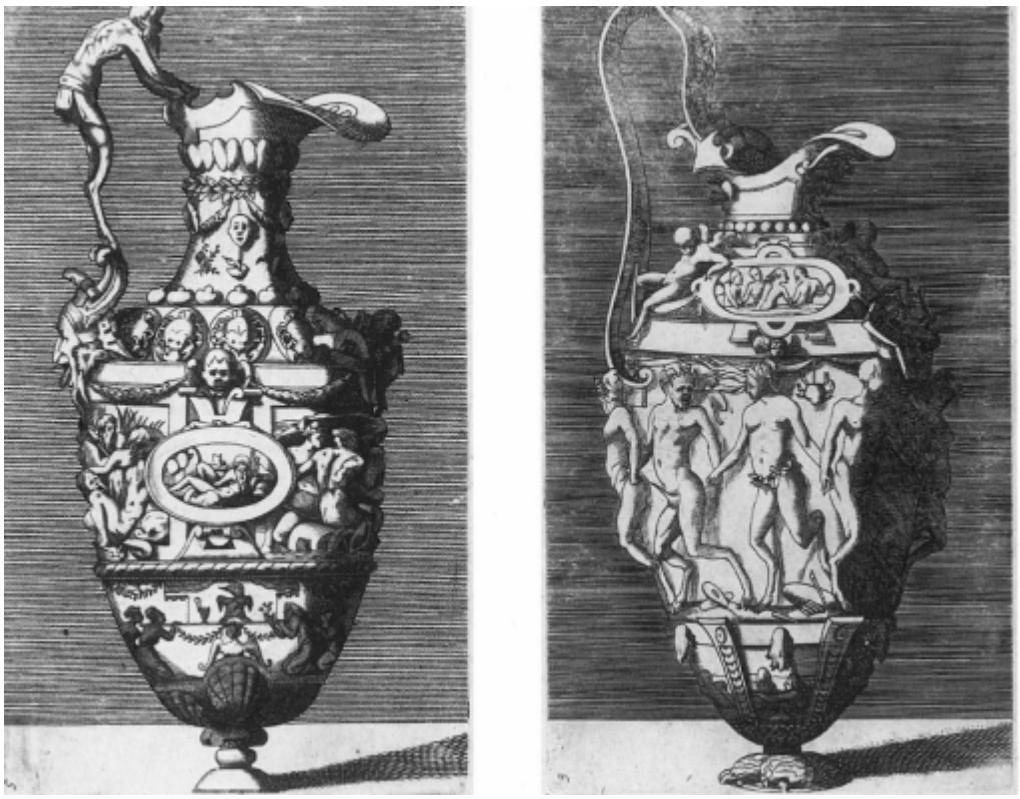

Figure 65: René Boyvin, two designs for vases, after Léonard Thiry, 1550s. Engraving. British Museum, London.